ROSA

KNUT HAMSUN

CARNEGIE LIBRARY
of
OHIO UNIVERSITY
ATHENS, OHIO

Call No. _____

Rosa

The Works of

KNUT HAMSUN

Winner of the Nobel Prize for Literature, 1920

BENONI
Translated by A. G. Chater

ROSA
Translated by A. G. Chater

HUNGER
(*Sult*) Translated by George Egerton
With an introduction by Edwin Björkman

GROWTH OF THE SOIL
(*Markens Grøde*) Translated, with an essay on Hamsun, by W. W. Worster

PAN
Translated by W. W. Worster
With an introduction by Edwin Björkman

SHALLOW SOIL
(*Ny Jord*) Translated, with an introductory essay, by Carl Christian Hyllested

DREAMERS
(*Svaermere*) Translated by W. W. Worster

WANDERERS
(*Under Høstjaernen* and *En Vendrer Spiller med Sordin*)
Translated by W. W. Worster
With an introduction by Edwin Björkman

VICTORIA
Translated by A. G. Chater

CHILDREN OF THE AGE
(*Børn av Tiden*) Translated by J. S. Scott

SEGELFOSS TOWN (*Segelfoss By*)
Translated by J. S. Scott

IN THE GRIP OF LIFE *A Play*
Translated by Graham and Tristan Rawson

2107026

Rosa

Translated from the Norwegian of

KNUT HAMSUN

by Arthur G. Chater

PT
8950
H3
R6713
1926X

OHIO UNIVERSITY
LIBRARY

NEW YORK

Alfred · A · Knopf

MCMXXVI

OHIO UNIVERSITY
LIBRARY

COPYRIGHT, 1926, BY ALFRED A. KNOPF, INC. ·
SET UP, ELECTROTYPED AND PRINTED BY
THE VAIL-BALLOU PRESS, INC., BINGHAMTON,
N. Y. · ESPARTO PAPER MANUFACTURED IN
SCOTLAND AND FURNISHED BY W. F. ETHER-
INGTON & CO., NEW YORK. · BOUND BY THE
H. WOLFF ESTATE, NEW YORK.

823.823
H23r

MANUFACTURED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Rosa

I

IN the winter of 18— I sailed to Lofoten in one of Rönneberg's fishing smacks from Aalesund. We were barely four weeks on the trip; I went ashore at Skroven and settled down to wait for the chance of a boat to take me on. At Eastertime there was a boat sailing home to the mainland, and though she would take me short of my real destination I nevertheless went with her. What brought me up here was that I had a college friend in these parts who was called Friar Vendt; we two had agreed to join in a ramble. This was fifteen years ago, half a generation ago.

On the good day Wednesday the 16th of April I arrived at the trading station of Sirilund. Here dwelt Trader Mack, the great magnate. And here by his side dwelt the worthy man Benoni Hartvigsen; he was rich and helped every one. These two were equal owners of Sirilund and of all its vessels and industries. "Go to Mack or go to Hartvigsen, whichever your honour pleases," the men of the homeward-bound boat told me.

I went up to the house and looked around me and determined to pass on, since everything was so big and fine about old Mack's home. I went instead

OHIO UNIVERSITY
LIBRARY

to Benoni Hartvigsen's house and presented myself about midday. As I was nobody of importance but simply came with my gun and a few poor clothes in a bag, I modestly asked for lodging in the men's quarters at Sirilund till the time came.

"We'll see and manage that," said Hartvigsen. "Where do you come from?"

"From the South. And I'm bound for Utvær and Os district. My name is Parelius, student. For that matter I can draw and paint if you have any use for these things."

"So you're a scholar, I hear."

"Yes. And I'm no runaway. I am to meet a friend in these parts; we have had the same schooling and we are both sportsmen. We are going on a ramble."

"See and sit you down," said Hartvigsen and put a chair for me.

Amongst other things there was a little piano in the room, but I restrained myself from going to try it at once; on the other hand I gave Hartvigsen all the information he asked for and he gave me food and drink. He was very friendly towards me and offered to keep me in his house instead of sending me to the men's quarters at Sirilund.

"You can stop with me and give me a bit of help with one thing and another," said he. "Are you married?" he asked with a smile.

"No. I am only twenty-two; I'm still growing."

"Then perhaps you're not in love either?"

"No."

Finally Hartvigsen said:

"As you know a lot of learned things maybe you could draw a likeness of my house and my boat-house, in short all my buildings, and make me some pictures?"

I smiled, a little surprised at his queer talk; for this was just what I had been telling him, that I could draw and paint.

"I have all sorts of things in my house," he said, "and outside my house there are my doves flying about, and I am the owner of everything you see; but I have no pictures," said he, "no, that I have not."

To all this I answered that I would put my best work into it and depict anything he wished.

When Hartvigsen went down to the quays and left me to myself I felt a craving to seek solitude. No door was barred against me, I went where I pleased; I sat down in the boat-house awhile full of gratitude to God that I had been brought so far out into the world and had hitherto met good people.

When the holidays were over I began to draw Hartvigsen's house and boat-house and to paint them in colours. When I went to the store and was served with one thing and another for this purpose I saw for the first time Trader Mack, the great magnate. He was well on in years, but sharp and decided, and withal very grand and distinguished in his manner. He had a valuable diamond pin in his

shirt and many gold trinkets on his watch-chain. When he heard that I was no runaway, but on the contrary a student who intended going on a ramble, he showed me no small esteem.

As my painting proceeded Hartvigsen was more and more pleased with my work and praised me for making the houses so lifelike. I sent a letter to my fellow-student Friar Vendt that I was well on the way to him, but that I was detained among good people.

"Write that you won't come before autumn," Hartvigsen said to me. "I shall be everlastingly wanting you for all sorts of things in the summer. When the vessels come home from Lofoten I want them drawn too, above all the schooner *Funtus* which I have sailed to Bergen."

Nor was there anything remarkable in my settling down for so long in this great place; people flocked hither one after another and it rarely happened that any one went away again at once. A week or two after my arrival a hookmaker came to Sirilund. When he had made all kinds of hooks for great and small he did not take his departure but continued to stay on. He manifestly could do no other work than bending his little hooks; but he had besides a great talent for mimicking the voices of animals and birds. He concealed a little instrument in his mouth and could sing like a wood full of little birds without letting you see that the song came from him. He was quite wonderful; even

Mack himself stopped to listen when the hookmaker walked across the yard. At last Mack found employment for him at the mill so that he might be constantly on the spot as a curiosity belonging to Sirilund.

II

WHEN I had been staying with Hartvigsen a little while I met Mack one day on the way to the store in company with a strange lady. She had on a cloak of blue fox, but wore it open, as it was near Holy Rood Day.* I had grown unused to the sight of young ladies, and God bless her! I thought as I bowed and had a glimpse of her kind face. She must have been a good deal over twenty, tall and with hair neither fair nor dark and dark lips. She looked at me exactly as a sister might, with innocence on her brow.

Her memory stayed with me and when I chanced to mention our meeting to Hartvigsen, he said at once:

"That was Rosa. Was she handsome?"

"Yes."

"That was Rosa. So she has come back."

I did not wish to appear curious and said simply:

"Yes, she was handsome. She did not look as if she came from here."

Hartvigsen answered:

"No, she is not from here. Well, she's only from the next parish. She's on a visit to Mack."

* May 3.

The old servant at Hartvigsen's house told me later on more about Rosa; she was the daughter of the clergyman of the neighbouring parish, she had been married a short time, now she was alone, her husband had gone south. And Rosa had once been regularly engaged to Hartvigsen, the wedding was all arranged, and then she married another. So strange was the story.

I noticed that for some days after this Hartvigsen took to dressing more smartly and giving himself more the air of a gentleman. "I hear Rosa has come," he remarked casually to his servant.

We went across to Sirilund together. For that matter we had nothing to do there, either of us. Hartvigsen said:

"Isn't there anything you want from the store?"

"No. Well, yes, some pins, drawing pins."

She whom we expected to see at the store was not there. When I had got my pins Hartvigsen said again:

"Are you going to use those pins for the pictures?"

"Yes, for the frames."

"Perhaps you will want more things for the frames. Take your time and think about it."

And I guessed he said this to spin out the time.

I found one or two other things to ask for; meanwhile Hartvigsen stood waiting and glanced at the door now and again. At last he left me and went into the office. Being part-owner of the whole

place and so rich besides, he opened the office door without knocking, and that was certainly a thing no one else did.

While I stood waiting at the counter she whom we were looking for came. She must have seen Hartvigsen come in and wanted to catch him. As she crossed the floor she looked at me full-face and a flush of heat came into my cheeks; she went straight behind the counter and began searching for something on the shelves. Her figure was so tall and rich and she handled the goods so gently; I looked at her a long while. She had the bearing of a young mother.

If only Hartvigsen would come out of the office! I thought. A moment after he came. He greeted Rosa and she replied "Good day." Their relations did not seem particularly strained now, though they had once been an engaged couple; ah, how calmly he gave her his hand, and she did not blush, nor did she seem bashful at meeting him again.

"So you're in these parts?" he said.

"Yes," said she.

She turned back to the shelves and resumed her search. There was a pause. Then she said without looking at him:

"It's not for myself I'm tumbling over your goods, it's for the house."

"What then?"

"Well, here I am behind the counter as in old days; but I won't steal anything."

"What nonsense!" he said in a hurt tone.

I thought to myself: in Hartvigsen's place I would not stay here any longer. He stayed. Something must have stirred within him since he did not tear himself away. Why did he not step behind the counter himself and offer to find what she was looking for? He owned it all, didn't he? And now he was standing with me outside the counter like a customer. Oh, but Steen the store clerk and Martin the store clerk, they did not dare to speak above a whisper in his presence, so boundlessly rich was he, and their master besides.

"I have a student with me on a visit," said Hartvigsen to Rosa. "And he's wondering if you couldn't come some time and play to us a little on the instrument. You see, I've got that instrument standing there."

"I can't play before company," she answered, shaking her head.

Hartvigsen waited a good while and then said:

"No, no, I only thought I'd ask. Well, well," he said to me, "perhaps you're ready now?"

"Yes."

"I really can't play at all," said Rosa suddenly. "But if you—won't you please come into the drawing-room?"

We all three went up to Mack's drawing-room. There stood a new, expensive piano which Rosa played on. She took great pains, no doubt she wished to make up for having been so uncomplying at first.

When she had finished she said: "That is all I know."

Hartvigsen sat on, unwilling to go. Mack came in; he was surprised and showed himself very amiable; we were given wine and cakes. He took me round the room and showed me his pictures, delightful paintings and engravings; meanwhile Hartvigsen and Rosa sat talking together. They talked about a lot of things I had not heard before; about a child, a little girl called Martha, Steen the store clerk's daughter. Hartvigsen would take the child into his home if Rosa thought well of it.

"No, I don't," replied Rosa.

"Think it over," said Mack to her all of a sudden.

Then Rosa began to cry and said:

"What is it you're both trying to get me to do!"

This upset Hartvigsen; he tried to make it good again:

"You have trained the child to curtsy. That was all I meant. I wanted to take her home because you have taught her such pretty manners. It's nothing to cry about."

"Well, take the child, God bless you. But I can't come to you," Rosa exclaimed.

Hartvigsen thought a long time and said:

"I can't take the child without you."

"Of course not!" Mack seconded.

Then Rosa flung up her hand and left the room.

III

THE boats and other craft were coming home from Lofoten, shouts and singing were heard in the bay, the sun shone and it was springtime. Hartvigsen was plunged in thought all day long, but when the vessels arrived with the fish he had plenty to do and it made him brighter. Rosa I did not see.

I made a curious acquaintance in the keeper of the lighthouse. His name was Schöning and he had formerly been a sea captain. I met him one afternoon when I was strolling over the rocks and watching the birds at the water's edge; he sat on a stone doing nothing. As I came up he looked at me persistently, since I was a stranger, and I looked back at him.

"Where are you going?" he asked.

"I am out looking at the birds," I replied. "Isn't that allowed?"

He made no answer and I walked past.

When I turned and came back he was still sitting on his stone.

"When the birds are nesting they should not be disturbed," he said. "What are you walking here for?"

I asked in return:

"What are you sitting here for?"

"Ah, young man!" he said, holding up the palm of his hand. "What am I sitting here for? I sit here keeping pace with my existence. Ay, that's what I'm doing."

I suppose I must have smiled, and he gave a withered grimace of a smile in return and went on:

"I said to myself to-day, now let's see that you begin to play a part in your own life's comedy. Good, I replied to myself. And so I took a seat here."

He was so strange; I did not know the Lightkeeper and thought he wanted to poke fun at me.

"Isn't it you that's staying with Benoni Hartvigsen?" he asked.

"Yes."

"You're not to give him any greeting from me."

"Have you anything against him?"

"Yes. These immense riches beneath our feet were once his. At this moment you are standing upon a million's worth of silver; this was his. And then he sold it all and reduced himself to nothing."

"Isn't Hartvigsen rich?"

"No. If he bought himself decent clothes he'd have enough left for porridge."

"Is it a fact that you were the one who discovered these treasures and yet would not buy them for a trifle?" I asked.

"What did I want with the treasures?" answered

the Lightkeeper. "My two daughters are well married, my son Einar will soon be dead. And as for my wife and me, we can't eat more than we do. I suppose you think me uncommonly foolish?"

"No, I'm sure you're wise beyond my understanding."

"Just so," said the Lightkeeper. "And another thing: Life must always be treated like a woman. Ought we not to be gallant to Life and let her be the winner? We must give in and give in and leave all treasures alone."

The mail-boat came swimming into the bay and I noticed that a lot of people were collected on the quay and that flags were hoisted in Sirilund and on the quays. There was a German band playing on board the boat; their brass instruments flashed in the sunshine. I saw Mack and Mack's housekeeper, Hartvigsen and Rosa on the quay, but they were not waving to anyone and there was no waving from the ship.

"I wonder what the flags are for?" I asked the Lightkeeper.

"For you, for me, how do I know!" he answered indifferently. But I saw that his eyes and nostrils dilated at the shining horns and the music.

When I left him he relapsed into his own thoughts. He seemed tired of my questions and of me, and heavens! how he had allowed Life to win against him, I thought. I turned round twice; he sat perfectly motionless, shrivelled up in his grey

OHIO UNIVERSITY
LIBRARY

coat, with a ragged hat that hung down on every side.

I took the road down to the quays and was told that Mack's daughter Edvarda was landing from the ship. She had been married to a Finnish Baron and had been left a widow that winter; she had two children.

Now Rosa began to wave her handkerchief and there was an answering wave from the lady on board; Mack did not wave. But he was careful to call out to the men in the tender: "Mind you bring the Baroness and the children ashore comfortably!"

As I stood there I could not help a feeling of surprise that Rosa had been engaged to Hartvigsen and had then calmly married another. Hartvigsen was a big, strong man with a good-natured, intelligent face; and then he was rich and ready to help those in need, so there was nothing to be said against his heart. So what can have been Rosa's objection to him? He was beginning to turn a little grey about the ears, but he had the thickest shock of hair; when he laughed he showed his big yellow teeth, they were sound every one. So Rosa must have objected to him for some inner reason which she kept hid.

The Baroness came ashore with her two little girls. Her figure was tall and thin, she was thickly veiled. When she shook hands with her father she did not raise her veil and kiss him, there was no sign of joy in either of them; but when she began to talk

to Rosa she brightened and there was a fine velvety tone in her voice.

There was also a foreign gentleman in the boat with her. When he came ashore it appeared that he was immoderately drunk and his eyes seemed to take in nothing; both Mack and Hartvigsen bowed to him and he was barely capable of nodding back without putting his hand to his cap. I was told that this was an Englishman, Sir Hugh Trevelyan, and that he came here year after year and fished for salmon in the big river in the next parish; it was the same gentleman who had bought the silver rocks from Hartvigsen for a large sum. He got a man to carry his traps and left the quay.

I stood well on one side, as I was a stranger and did not wish to intrude; but presently when Mack and his party began to walk up towards the house I joined in the rear. As Hartvigsen was turning off to his own house the Baroness stopped and talked to him for a few moments; at the same time she drew off her glove and gave her hand to me too, a long thin hand with a strange softness in its grasp.

Later in the evening the Baroness's two little girls were down on the beach. They stooped with their hands pressed against their knees, eagerly examining something in the sand. They were two bright and healthy children, but they were so shortsighted that they could not see anything on the ground without stooping down. It was a dead starfish they were

looking at and I told them a little about this strange creature which they had never seen before. I walked on with them across the rocks and told them the names of the various birds and showed them the seaweed at the water's edge; it was all new to them.

IV

I HAVE really finished my painting, but Hartvigsen does not want to let me go. It is cheerful to have me about the place, he says. And the picture is to his liking; there is the house, the boat-shed and the dovecote, it is all there; but when summer comes on Hartvigsen wants me to paint a green background to the picture: the woods of the common ending in a purple mist far away towards the mountains. The result of this will be that I shall have to alter my cool atmosphere, and indeed the colour of the houses themselves. "And now you might just go and make a picture of the schooner," says Hartvigsen.

I row myself out to the schooner. It is a bright day; all the vessels lie washing their fish, which is then spread out all over the drying ground. The English visitor, Sir Hugh Trevelyan, stands ashore leaning on his fishing-rod and watches the process. They tell me he did the same last year for two days in succession. He never lifts his eyes to anyone among this crowd of people; all he looks at is the fish being washed; now and then he takes a bottle out of his knapsack in the sight of all and drinks a few big gulps. Then he returns to his fixed staring.

Rosa

I sit in my boat making a pencil-drawing of the schooner and the big ten-oared boats that lie alongside discharging the cargo. It is a delightful occupation and as it comes out well I feel happy. That morning I had been to the store and had brought away with me an impression of a peculiarly intimate nature which gave me lasting comfort. Rosa must have forgotten it all the next moment, but I remembered it: I opened the door and held it open for her; she looked at me and said Thanks; that was all.

That was all. And it is half a generation ago.

Deep and smooth lay the bay, perfectly motionless it lay; but each time a pair of fish heavy with salt was thrown down from the deck of the schooner, the boat alongside sank a hair's breadth and set up a tiny ripple on the surface. I wished I could draw these ripples and also the fine shadows which the sea-birds cast upon the water in their flight. They were like shadows made by breath, a breathing upon velvet. A loon got up at the head of the bay and swept along just above the surface past all the islands out to the open sea, leaving behind it a quavering line of *r*'s; its long, stiff neck made one think of iron, of a projectile. Just where the bird vanished there was a porpoise tumbling over the surface: it seemed to be turning cartwheels in the thick velvet. There was beauty everywhere.

The Baroness's children called to me from the beach; I rowed in and fetched them. They had not seen me out in the bay, but somebody had told them

I was there and so they began calling my name, which I had told them. They peered into my picture with their shortsighted eyes and the bigger one told me she knew how to draw towns. The little one, who was five years old, was made sleepy by the movement of the boat; I spread my jacket under her on the thwart and sang gently to her eyes till she fell asleep. I too had a little sister once.

Then the big girl and I chatted; she used a Swedish word now and then and could talk pure Swedish when she chose, otherwise she used her mother's tongue. She told me that every Easter morning her mamma let her look at the sun through a piece of yellow silk, to see how it danced with joy at the resurrection of Jesus. And did the sun dance here too?

The little one slept.

After a good while I rowed the children back to land; on the way the sleeper was awakened by her sister: "Wake up now, Tonna!" Tonna woke up at last and lay for a while not knowing quite where she was. Then she was rather put out and made a face at her sister who was laughing at her, but the next moment she stood right up so that I had to hold her. I got my jacket back. On the beach was the Baroness calling to us; little Tonna and little Alina were beaming with their adventure in a boat. But Tonna did not like to be told that she had fallen asleep.

Rosa was also on the beach; soon after Hartvig-

sen walked up, he was bound for the drying rocks; we were a number of people on that little spot. The Baroness thanked me for what I had told the children about starfish and birds, then she turned to Hartvigsen and talked to him the whole time; Rosa stood still and listened. Then out of politeness she asked to see my picture; while she was looking at it I noticed that she was simply trying to hear what the Baroness and Hartvigsen were talking about.

"There are such great changes here," the Baroness might say. "And I was once in love with you, Hartvigsen," she might say. "I, a woman of over thirty, with my numerous daughters," she might say. . . . She had on a white dress which made her look still taller and thinner and she turned her head and shoulders to look one way or the other without changing her position. Her face was not handsome, but small and dark, and there was a shadow on her upper lip; but she had a beautiful head. She took off her hat.

"Your numerous daughters," laughed Hartvigsen. "Why, there aren't more than two."

"Two too many," said she.

Hartvigsen repeated with heavy pleasantry:

"So there's not more than two—so far. Ha-ha. Whatever there may be to come."

The Baroness laughed:

"I see you have good hopes of me."

Rosa showed a pucker above her nose and for the sake of saying something I asked her:

"I would rather not colour my drawing, I am not so good at painting. What do you think, shall I leave it as it is?"

"That's funny, I was thinking the same," she answered absently and again turned her ear to the Baroness.

These words I have put down among those the Baroness said. Oh, but she made many pretty little speeches besides; perhaps I am libelling her and tearing her words out of their context. When she had put her foot in it by her thoughtless speech she looked helpless, with a constrained smile. Life was not good to her and she herself was not good, but she was unhappy. She was so supple of build; she clasped her hands and raised her arms above her head so that she seemed to be standing in a gateway talking to some one outside. It was very beautiful.

V

HARTVIGSEN was invited to a party at Sirilund in honour of the Baroness and the message asked him to bring me. I knew very well that I had no party clothes and wanted to stay behind; Hartvigsen thought my clothes were good enough, but I knew better; I had learnt all these things in my good home.

In the Baroness's honour Hartvigsen was determined to dress with excessive smartness. He had once bought a suit of dress clothes in Bergen for his wedding, and now he put it on for the first time; but it did not become him. And perhaps it was hardly the suit for him to wear on this occasion, if Rosa recognized it. This did not appear to have struck him.

He offered me fine clothes too, but they were all too big for me, as I was slighter than he. Then Hartvigsen thought I might put on one of his jackets over my own. "That'll make you bulk better," he said. I learnt afterwards that it was the fashion in these parts to put on two jackets if you wanted to be grand; even on warm days in summer you often saw two jackets.

When Hartvigsen had gone I strolled on the

beach for a while and then went in again and sat down by myself. Some time passed; I read a little, overhauled my gun; then Rosa unexpectedly knocked at the door and came in.

She had not been here before during my stay, so I got up in some surprise to receive her. She had been sent to fetch me to Sirilund. As she had taken so much trouble I could not very well persist in declining; I made an excuse for my clothes and went out at once to tidy myself. I noticed that from the moment she came in Rosa looked about her to see how Hartvigsen's house was kept, whether he was properly looked after. On coming back into the room I caught her arranging the things on the sideboard.

"Excuse me," she said, greatly embarrassed. "I was only—it was nothing——"

Then we went to Sirilund.

I remember at this dinner some traders from the outlying stations; they wore two jackets. Their wives were also far too heavily dressed. The Lightkeeper and his wife were there besides, and Rosa's parents, the clergyman and his wife from the neighbouring parish; their name was Barfod. The parson was a powerful, good-looking man, a sportsman and a trapper. We talked of the mountains and the forests. He invited me to his parsonage; I must come with Rosa some day when she was going home across the common, he said.

Mack proposed the health of his daughter in a

little speech. Plenty of people can use big words and yet make no impression; Mack's speech was one of few and simple words, but very effective. He was a well-bred man, he said and did what was called for and no more; his daughter sat there with fixed glance looking past us all, like a woodland pool lying still and open-eyed. She had no comfort in anything. And she had the most incredible tricks; it was as though she had been brought up to take her meals in the kitchen and had never been able to cure herself of the bad habits learnt there. Oh, but I suppose she did it all to slight us, to show us how little we mattered to her. I will put down a few of the strange faults she was guilty of; they gave one indeed the impression of a regular system of bad manners, and yet she was a Baroness. She began by picking up something to clean her nails with; Pastor Barfod, who was sitting next to her, saw it and immediately turned his eyes away. She stuck her elbow on the table when putting anything into her mouth. When she drank I could hear the wine gurgling inside her from my place across the table. She cut up her whole helping of meat before she began to eat it; when the cheese was served I noticed time after time that she spread more butter on her bread after she had bitten it; indeed she spread the butter just where her teeth had been—no, never had I seen such manners in my home. And after the meal she had little hiccups and puffed out her cheeks as though the food was coming up again.

After dinner she talked to Hartvigsen and I heard her saying that she had got into a sweat during the meal. And she was not ashamed. I thought at first that all this exaggerated naturalness was due to the want of associates of her own class. And Hartvigsen, who knew no better, could go pretty far without offending her. There were four big silver angels standing in the room, each on its pedestal; they were for holding candles. Hartvigsen said with a sly look: "I see the angels have come down to earth again!" "Yes," replied the Baroness with a laugh, "my old papa had them to decorate his bed for many years, but that's no place for white angels!"

How excessively explicit she could be on occasion! And I could not understand why she affected such coarseness to show her contempt of us.

I talked to the children; they were my refuge and my delight; they showed me drawings and books, we played tip-tap-toe on a board. Now and then I listened to the traders from the skerries as they talked to Mack and put on airs, trying to please him. There were liqueurs with the coffee in the big veranda; nothing was lacking. Mack showed himself most amiable to every one. There were long pipes for the men, and the women sat quietly by themselves and listened to what their husbands said; now and then they whispered to one another.

Hartvigsen took a pipe and a glass like the rest. The wine at dinner had taken off some of his heavi-

ness, now the liqueur jogged him on and made him more apt to talk. He evidently wanted to show these people from the skerries that he was not out of his element in Mack's house; he went and chose a pipe for himself and came and sat down as if he had been brought up in these surroundings. He was a child. He was the only one in evening dress, but he carried it off well and brushed the lapels now and then. Though he was Mack's partner and so immensely rich besides, it was not for him but for Mack that the small traders had most respect.

"As to prices of flour and such like," said Hartvigsen, "we buy all our shipments *franco*. The Russians they sell as soon as they see the money and we're importing all the time, all the year round."

One of the traders looked at Mack and looked at Hartvigsen and enquired politely:

"But prices are not the same all the year round; what is your best time for buying?"

Mack's eye fell on the Lightkeeper, who was still indoors; he went after him at once to bring him out for coffee.

When Hartvigsen was left alone he explained the whole thing to the trader in his own way:

"In such a big country as Russia there's always a lot of things to make grain prices vary. In wet years there are the floods. The roads are impassable, the farmer can't bring his crops to market. Then the price goes up at Archangel."

"Wonderful!" says the trader.

"That's the barley," says Hartvigsen, warming up to it. "And for the reasons stated it's just the same with the rye," he says.

But he grew still more talkative when the Baroness came and sat down at the table:

"You see, we get our reports. When grain and rye and all kinds of goods look like starting to go up, that's the time for us to keep our eyes open and buy."

Hartvigsen was an ignorant man, but there was an artless good humour about him which always stood him well in conversation. When there was nobody present who made him feel awkward he became more and more at his ease, forgot to use grand words and talked like his equals. His most promising listener, the trader who had enquired so politely, said again:

"Ay ay, you're the one who can show us what's what."

But now the Baroness had joined them and Hartvigsen's view of things was immediately extended:

"We who have travelled and seen a bit and been to Bergen and all that, we don't think we're up to much."

"Oh!" says another trader, wagging his head; that was a fine joke of Hartvigsen's.

The Baroness wagged her head too and said with her face turned full towards him:

"No, Hartvigsen, there's no doubt you're the one who knows what's what."

"Ah, do you think so?" he answered gratefully. But to meet her halfway he added: "But I'm bound to say there's some thousands of fellows like me in Bergen."

"Oh!" protested the trader again; he could see no end to Hartvigsen's jocularity.

Rosa was standing inside the room. I went up to her and pointed out her claret glass which she had left standing on a table. The room was so large; this glass stood by itself far away, so lonely, gleaming with its rich dark colour.

"Yes," was all Rosa said; her thoughts were far away. She must already have been jealous of the Baroness, her friend, and thinking of coming to keep house for Hartvigsen. She circled round the coffee-table in the veranda and went away again without finding rest.

Hartvigsen in his good nature said to her:

"Sit down now, Rosa, do. Let's have a glass to pass the time."

She smiled and it looked as if a miracle had happened with her and she had fallen in love with Hartvigsen. She sat down.

And I went out on to the veranda and through the veranda; there was a great deal to look at outside as well as in. After a while I went in again; toddy had appeared on the table. Mack drank hardly anything, Hartvigsen too had almost stopped drinking, but they both toasted their guests frequently. A different spirit had come over the party.

One trader asked another what time he made it; when the man chattered on, ignoring the question, Mack put in tactfully: "It's quite early yet, only three o'clock." A little while after the trader again asked his companion: "What time is it by *your* watch?" The other was sitting on thorns, he was an elderly man too, but he blushed painfully. What children they were up here in the North! This trader from the skerries was resplendent with a gold locket on his hair-chain, but he can't have had any watch at the end of it. And his friend was trying to show him up.

Then the Hookmaker came past the veranda and we heard the chirping of birds. Mack beckoned him in and offered him a chair and a glass. So the Hookmaker sat there awhile and gave us a wood full of the song of birds; but he let us see nothing as he scanned the windows of the veranda with an innocent air.

Later on Rosa played in the drawing-room. She was as restless as ever and kept turning her eyes towards the party in the veranda. "No, if you don't want to listen I shall stop!" she said and got up. And yet it was only that the Baroness and Hartvigsen had been sitting close together and perhaps saying a word or two.

Then I went out into the yard again. I took a telescope with me and amused myself by watching the people on the drying ground.

VI

A DAY or two later I saw Rosa go down to the quay. She did not walk as though with an object, but was quietly strolling. She has gone there to meet Hartvigsen, I thought to myself. As I knew now that I had the whole house to myself for a time I settled down to something which my vanity would not let anyone discover, oh, not yet, not until my time came. I shall set down later what it was.

But I could find no happy rest either; Rosa's walk to the quay had set me stirring; I decided to row over to the drying ground to calm myself again; but the boat lay by the quayside. Ah, it may have been just because the boat was there that I wanted to go for a row.

"There he is!" said Hartvigsen as I came down to the quay. "Now we can ask him."

"No—!" pleaded Rosa, bashful for some reason or other.

I stood waiting a moment, but as they said no more it did not become me to stay; I unfastened the boat and rowed away.

In the afternoon Hartvigsen pressed me to stay with him through the summer. He had a great

deal of work for me and would ask me to teach him various things; I was to be a sort of tutor for him in different subjects. Hartvigsen told me further that Rosa might agree to come and keep house for him if we were two and he was not the only man she had to mix with. I promised all he asked me and was glad to do it.

In the evening Hartvigsen went to Sirilund and was moody for several hours after he came home. Then he put on his hat again and went back to Sirilund.

His behaviour was so strange; he must have met the Baroness when he went out and perhaps something she had said had influenced him. I saw them on the beach at half-past one at night; then they walked away along the shore, out towards the common. I wonder what Rosa says to this? I thought.

And what was Mack's daughter thinking of? She was stranger than all the rest; she was a Baroness in this out-of-the-way place, she had that charming little head on her supple figure and there seemed moreover to be some queer points in her character.

Day after day went by and Rosa did not come. Hartvigsen appeared not to care. "When is Rosa coming?" I asked, and I could hear my heart beating. "I don't know," replied Hartvigsen pensively.

I gave him some lessons in spelling; in arithmetic he was quick and accurate and knew all he wanted. He was thoughtful and intelligent in everything. As we had no books I had to relate the life of Napo-

leon and the War of Greek Independence by word of mouth a little at a time. What impressed him most about me was that I had learnt languages and could read what was written on the different foreign goods in the store, such as reels of thread and cotton goods from England. And these things he learnt instantly, because his head was so empty of knowledge that it was almost virgin soil. "What if I got myself a Bible in the Hebrew tongue," he asked; "would you be able to read it?" And he made up his mind to buy a Hebrew Bible in Bergen.

I met Rosa on the road. And she, whose manner was always so becomingly reserved, stopped me and asked with an awkward smile:

"How are you two getting on with your housekeeping?"

I was so surprised I answered:

"Quite well, thanks. But we're waiting for you."

"For me? Oh no, I expect I shall be going home to the parsonage one of these days perhaps."

"Are you not coming to us?" I asked with emotion.

"No, it doesn't look like it," she answered.

Her lips were big and red like copper; they trembled a little as she smiled and left me. I was going to remind her that her father had invited me to accompany her home, but thank God I refrained from doing so.

And I soon found what a good thing it was I had held my peace: in the evening Rosa came to Hart-

vigsen's house and I saw how it pained her that she had not more pride. She had however a clear and proper reason for calling: she wished to return a gold cross which Hartvigsen, it seems, had given her in the days of their engagement; a ring which was another gift of his she had unfortunately lost, she was so sorry.

"It doesn't matter," said Hartvigsen, surprised and indulgent.

"Yes, it is too bad," said Rosa. "And then I found a letter. It was one of yours. It is your letter from Lofoten."

All this was said before I had time to leave the room; Rosa was so wrought up and caught her breath as she spoke. But Hartvigsen preserved a strange calm throughout this scene; even before I closed the door I heard him say:

"Oh, that old letter. It must be shocking as concerns punctuation and——"

Rosa did not stay long. I saw her leave; she was bent forward and saw nothing, heard nothing. I thought of what it must have cost her to walk this path of humiliation.

The day after she came again. I felt deep pity for her and was grieved to see her so harassed. She was grey under the eyes and looked as if she had not slept; her lips were pale.

"No, you are not to go," she said to me. She turned to Hartvigsen and asked: "Have you got anybody to keep house for you?"

"No," he answered lazily and indifferently.

"I think I could do it," she said again.

Again he answered lazily and indifferently:

"Ah yes. But I'm not sure——"

"Then perhaps you have changed your mind?"

He must have felt that he had her in his power, and he blurted out with merciless brutality:

"No, it was you who changed your mind once upon a time. If so be you remember that."

She waited a moment, cowering lower and lower, said in a low voice, "Ah well!" and went away.

She had not sat down or taken her hand from the door-handle.

I left the room after her and made for the farthest end of the boat-shed, where I fell on my knees to God for the unhappy woman. My uneasiness then drove me to Sirilund, to the store, to the mill, back again to the store. Hartvigsen said when I returned in the evening:

"I'm going out haddock fishing to-night; you'll have to mind the house meantime."

He was in a jocular and strangely expectant mood and he often looked out along the road.

So I went back to Sirilund to avoid being present when Hartvigsen rowed out to fish—evidently he would not be alone. I roamed about as in a dream.

The night passed.

Next day Hartvigsen and I were sitting outside the house chatting; it was well on in the morning, I remember it began to rain a little—then Rosa came

for the third time. But in the interim Hartvigsen had been for a long nocturnal ramble with the Baroness. To me he had said that he was going out haddock fishing, but he had been for a ramble in the forest in the warm night.

Rosa walked up unsteadily; as soon as I saw her I was afraid she had taken something strong to drink. I wished myself far away and rose at her first words:

"I seem to be always coming here. What was I going to say—out in the woods, eh? Out in the aspen grove, eh?"

"What of it?" asked Hartvigsen at once. "We were just passing the time for company."

Rosa gave an unnatural laugh:

"She says she's over thirty. Ay, she is over thirty."

"What of it?" said Hartvigsen. "You needn't worry anyhow!"

Rosa looked at him and reflected; I turned round and saw she was reflecting and heard her say:

"She is much older than I am, you know."

And as she said it she threw herself on the ground and broke into sobs.

VII

IT rained for two days and nights and the fish were stacked and covered with birch bark. There was no work to be done on the drying ground and the weather was dark and unpleasant; but fields and meadows flourished and their crops waved in the breeze.

Mack had offered to include Hartvigsen's name in that of the firm; only it would have to be paid for. Hartvigsen asked my advice about this, though I am sure he had already made up his mind. I knew nothing of the great world of commerce and could not advise him. Mack's name was an old one and well known; it doubtless had its value; on the other hand, Hartvigsen brought into the business his personal fortune and solidity. For that matter the partnership was already an accomplished fact.

He wrote something on a piece of paper, showed it to me and said:

"That's how it ought to look. Like another foreign name."

On the paper was written: MACK & HARTWICH.

I suspected at once that the Baroness had had something to do with this change of name. Hart-

vigsen kept his eyes on me as I sat thinking with the paper before me. I had taught this man to read and write a little, but not enough, alas, not sufficiently; only for show, like a watch-chain with no watch at the end of it. Hartwich? But Rosa must have loved him, since she came and humbled herself before him and wept.

Three times she had come. When she came the third time and threw herself upon the ground Hartvigsen was moved, something of his old feeling was revived, besides which he was certainly flattered at being supplicated like a master; he restored her to favour and bade her arise and accompany him into the house. There they became of one mind upon many things, ay, a multitude of things; I entered the room a good hour later and found them reconciled. I looked at Rosa in the greatest astonishment; there was no longer any suffering in her face, nothing but satisfaction and peace.

"Well then, you'll come one of these days," said Hartvigsen to her as she left.

But to me he said nothing.

Rosa came. She was leading Martha, Steen the store clerk's little daughter, by the hand.

"Here we are!" said Rosa smiling. Martha curtsied as she had been taught and came up to us and took our hands and curtsied again. Hartvigsen said to them both: "Welcome to my house!"

At that moment some one stopped outside in the yard and looked at us through the window. It was

a Lapp. When Rosa caught sight of him she hid her face in her hands and said: "Ugh!"

"It's only that Gilbert," said Hartvigsen reassuringly, with a little laugh; "he's always hanging around here."

Rosa answered:

"He has brought me misfortune every time."

Hartvigsen went out. I stayed behind and chatted a little with the child; I also exchanged a few words with Rosa. Without any enquiry on my part she began to talk about Gilbert the Lapp:

"It seems so strange: every time I move he turns up. And every time an event occurs in my life he turns up."

As she had already told me that these moves and events had turned out to her misfortune, I forbore to question her. I asked her to play something on the little piano. Martha, who had never heard such music, went up to her and stood watching her with wide eyes; now and then she turned to me as though asking whether I had ever heard the like.

Then Hartvigsen came in again. He sat down quietly and listened; he must have thought a good spirit had descended upon his house, since contrary to his custom he took off his hat and held it on his knee. He too looked across at me now and again, wagging his head in rapture, and his eyebrows were drawn high with pride and admiration. It was as though he prized music on his own instrument more than on Mack's.

We were now quite a family, four people besides the servant, who was to come in as before and do the rough work. Rosa got her clothes and things from home and settled down to live with us: little Martha slept with her in her room. Day after day went by.

In these early days nothing happened that is worth setting down; it would only be about myself, that I had my little joys and sorrows and the joys predominated. When Rosa was carrying out a tray I opened the door for her; when she came down in the morning I took my cap right off and greeted her—greater happiness than this I neither expected nor deserved, I was a stranger. But many a time we had a chat in the evening, and if Hartvigsen was silent then Rosa and I would begin. Oh, but sometimes Hartvigsen would not close his mouth the whole evening, simply that Rosa and I might not have a chance to begin. He was a child. Then Rosa had nothing for it but to play something or other on the piano; she played many lovely things.

Yet the effect of daily association with Rosa on this man was to make him less careful and bolder in his tone. It was not pleasant.

"What would you say if I was to move my ring back on to my right hand?" he laughingly asked her in my hearing. He had been wearing a plain gold ring all the time on the ring finger of his left hand; no doubt it was his old engagement ring; now he coolly transferred it to his right hand without wait-

ing for an answer. It was as though he took it for granted that she would agree. He went on: "And I'll have to get you a new ring in place of the one you lost."

She answered in a subdued tone:

"You know I can't accept a ring."

Then Hartvigsen announced that the King had dissolved her marriage with a certain Nikolai the parish clerk's son. "That Mack and I," he said, "have arranged the matter. Well, naturally it was that Benoni and I who stood the damage!"

I saw that this gave Rosa a hard knock and she sat down. I left the room.

Later on Hartvigsen explained to me that he had bought the consent of Rosa's husband to a divorce. It had cost him several thousand dollars. But no sooner had Nikolai the parish clerk's son received the money than he drank himself to death! So now he was dead. Well, I wonder if he *is* dead? I thought.

These events brought me no pleasure, but I thought to myself many a time that Rosa ought not to have come into this house. It was jealousy that had made her come, was my next thought, her jealousy of the Baroness had got the better of her. But why had that same Baroness let Hartvigsen go so easily? Why did she not go on with him? She had assuredly got a very good hold. There was something behind this which was hidden from my eyes. Perhaps old Mack knew what it was, he was

so politic, a man of imperial soul. Why should Hartvigsen pay money to have his name included in that of the firm? Oh, it had all been well thought out by Mack, that imperial soul.

But when Rosa had been with us for a couple of weeks Hartvigsen grew accustomed to her and was not always particular in what he said and did. I thought to myself, he can scarcely have been like this the first time they were engaged; but since then he had grown so excessively rich. So I suppose this man could not stand the accession of wealth, that must have been it.

"What do you think of this and that, Rosa, my dear?" he might say, slapping her on the back. He did not blush to drop hints about the Baroness, how she had been with him in the aspen grove, how she had confessed to being in love with him in her young days. When there was a question of new clothes for little Martha, Hartvigsen said yes at once and told Rosa: "You can just go to the store and put it down to me; they know me very well there. You can just put down: B. Hartwich. To drapery goods, value one dollar." When he had said this he turned to me with a self-satisfied smile. He was a child.

One more thing: he envied Mack the Hookmaker, was jealous that this poor creature with his bird-calls had gone to Mack instead of to him—Hartvigsen—with his request to be allowed to stay. In Hartvigsen's eyes the Hookmaker was a very devil of a per-

son; he had now been caught in the barn with Jakobine who was called Bramaputra; her husband Man Ole had come upon them. Oh, there was no mistake about it! And what did the Hookmaker do then? He denied it on oath, the daredevil; he laid his right forefinger to his eye and solemnly bade the Devil strike it!

Hartvigsen told us this and kept back nothing about Bramaputra in Rosa's presence. But of the Hookmaker he said: "I'd have been pleased to have him at my place; I'd have found no end of work for him all the time."

VIII

I HAD gone along the road to the mill and was turning back again when the Baroness overtook me; she had specks of white on her dress and had been in to see the millers. When I bowed she bestowed a word or two on me in passing; she had already passed me when suddenly she slackened her pace to let me come up. I asked permission to brush the flour from her dress and she stopped and thanked me. Then we strolled on together; but not from any choice of mine. She talked of various memories of her childhood: here she had walked as little Edvarda, had stood upright on the flour carts, had gone down alone to the aspen grove and sat there.

She was melancholy and her voice had its lovely velvet tones; she said: "We play at all the games of life and then there is nothing left to us!"

She influenced me strongly in her favour in that hour, even her long thin hands appealed to me with a strange fondness, though hitherto I had found their expression unchaste. I recalled to mind something I had heard of her one day. There was a man they called Jens Bairnsfather.* He had been

* The nickname (*Barnefar*) implies that he had had a child fathered on him.

in Mack's service in Edvarda's youth, but had since gone out to the skerries, had married, lost his health and sunk into poverty. His wife left him, went to Lofoten and did not come back; bairns he had none, Jens Bairnsfather. Some days ago he had come to Edvarda and looked at her, not saying much but standing there like a big dog. Then Edvarda got him a place at Sirilund and neighbourhood; he was to sell bones. He was to go round to the few houses where meat was eaten and collect the bones and bring them to the store and sell them dearly; afterwards they were to be sent south and ground into bone-dust. So he was to have all the bones from Sirilund. It made Mack smile a little that he should pay a fancy price for his own meat-bones, but he said, "Very well!" and was not the man to make a fuss about it. In the same way the meat-bones from Hartvigsen's kitchen were to go to Jens Bairnsfather. It was a funny thing, but Jens Bairnsfather took it seriously and would not take no for an answer. He earned good money; the very first time he sold his bones he was able to afford some clothes, and it was Edvarda herself who dealt with him at the store and made up the whole account. After that she provided Jens Bairnsfather with a lodging at Sirilund, where at first he shared a little room in the men's quarters with the ancient Fredrik Mensa who was bedridden, and later was given an even better room in a loft.

I remembered this incident, which showed that the

Baroness could be smart and resourceful. But now she was depressed. I made some remarks about the happiness of giving pleasure to others, to children, the people about us and the like.

She stopped.

"Happiness? Oh no!" she said sharply.

She frowned and thought a little more about it, then walked on again. Soon after she hurriedly stepped off the road and threw herself down on the grass. I followed and stood by her. She said again:

"Happiness? Oh no! If happiness came I should only take a long look at it, stare at it, so unfamiliar would it be. No, but of course there are brief moments that are better than other moments. We all know that."

"It must be so," I said. And I discovered that her forehead was wrinkled with sorrow and age; at this moment she was playing no tricks, she even let her under-lip hang down. All her youth was behind her.

"There was once a sportsman in those woods over there," she began again, pointing to the far distance. "His name was Glahn. Have you heard of him?"

"Yes."

"Yes. And he was here. He was a young man, Thomas Glahn was his name. Now and then I heard shots and I thought of firing an answering shot; now and then I went to meet him. By the way—Glahn? Ah, yes, for a few brief moments he

was the best there has been in my life; but . . . And I was so fond of him; oh, the whole world vanished when he came. I remember a man who had a walk! He wore a beard, he was like an animal; at times he would hold up one foot and listen, then he went on. He was dressed in furs too."

"Was it he?" I asked.

"Yes."

"How interesting it is to hear you talk about this."

"It is so many years ago; haven't people forgotten it yet? I myself generally forget it, but I remember it since I am at home again and come upon one place after another. I remember it to-day. But he was an animal; I was so wonderfully fond of him, he was big and kind. Sometimes he must have eaten reindeer moss, for his breath smelt like a reindeer's. There was a sort of gamy taste in his breath. I remember now that he was fond of me too. One day he came with his shirt open and his chest was covered with thick hair. It's like lying in a meadow! I thought, for I was so young. I kissed him a few times, that is how I know that I have never felt anything like it. And one day he came walking along the road; I could see that he was coming quietly towards me, and he returned my gaze the whole time, his eyes went well into me, something sweet began to stir within me, and when he came near I raised myself up to him and stayed there. Oh, now I have been married and all, but

never do I remember anything but that. He was perfectly lovely. Now and then he was out of spirits, he tied his necktie like a child, often he forgot his necktie and left it at home. But he was so lovely all the same and he knew no bounds. There was a doctor here at that time; he was lame; Glahn shot himself through the foot to be no better off than the doctor. He had a dog, its name was Æsop; Glahn shot it dead and sent the body to one who—to the one he loved. He knew no bounds, none at all. Ay, but he was no god, he was an animal. Glahn? He was just a wonderful animal."

"But you surely love him still. So it seems to me."

"No. Do I love him? I don't know what to say. I don't remember him often, he does not dwell in my thoughts. For that matter he's dead, they say, so for that reason alone—— No, but it seems to me now that it was good in those days. Often I seemed to move without touching the ground and I have never trembled as I did then. We must have been like two mad people at last, so lovely he was. One day when I was making little cakes he passed the window and looked in. I had kneaded the soft dough well and rolled it out and cut it up with a knife; then I showed him the knife and said: 'Would it not be best for us both to die?' 'Yes,' he answered, 'come with me to the hut and we'll do it!' I washed my hands and went with him to the hut. He began at once to fuss with one

thing and another and to wash and brush himself. Oh, but I had already changed my mind and he saw it; no, I could not die. Then he nodded that it was all the same to him; but I saw that he was deeply disappointed, he had put faith in me. Afterwards he put it down to his being simple and unable to understand a joke. There was often something queerly *idiotic* about him which influenced me. I thought to myself, one could get him to do any mortal thing and he would hold his tongue about it, one could make a great sinner of him and he would hold his tongue about it. Then you would suddenly find him with clear vision, second sight; he saw through everything. Oh, then he was not simple by any means, but quick and sharp. I remember one thing: there was a particularly tall and thin mountain ash in the woods; Glahn often looked at it and pointed it out to me, how tall and straight it was; I believe he was fond of it. Then one day I wanted to hurt him and I got some one to kill the tree by cutting it round above the roots till it barely stood upright. Next day Glahn came and said: 'Come with me into the woods.' And I went. He showed me the mountain ash and said: 'That's a bad piece of work.' 'If it's badly done then probably it was a woman who did it,' I said; I did not object to bringing suspicion upon myself; oh, I wanted it! 'No, it was a strong and stupid *left* hand that did it,' he answered. He could see it from the cuts. That made me a little afraid, for

what he said was true. 'Then it must have been done by a left-handed man,' I said. Then Glahn answered: 'No, it is too badly done. It was done by a man who either was feigning to be left-handed or has damaged his right hand.' Then I saw it was all up with the man I had got to do it, for he had his right hand in a sling; that was exactly what made me choose him, so as to deceive Glahn. Oh, but Glahn was not to be deceived, he found the man and punished him. Ooh! And in doing it Glahn only used one hand, that he might not have two hands against a man who had only one. I heard of it a few days after, and I went to Glahn to hurt him more and said: 'By the way, it was I who got that mountain ash of yours spoilt.' When I had said that I went my way. . . . Fancy my remembering it so well even now, it comes back to me bit by bit; he had such a direful way of finding everything out at times. And the man, my helper, is still alive, he came to me a few days ago; they call him Jens Bairnsfather."

"Oh?"

The Baroness glanced up at my brief query. I was thinking: so now she has just helped Jens Bairnsfather to a place and yet he once served her to torment Glahn. Does she then love a dead man to the point of hatred and cruelty and is she still trying to hurt him? Or is Glahn still alive and does she want to continue her torture?

I asked:

"Perhaps Glahn is not dead?"

"I don't know," she replied. "Oh yes, he must be. He was so changeable, the weather influenced him, the sun and the moon and the grass had power over him and the wind conversed with him. The breath of it up in the mountains went through him. Oh yes, he's dead now, it is so long since he was here, so terribly long since."

The Baroness got up and walked back to the mill. It was painful to look at her. There had been a new tone in what she had said, she had not smiled or played tricks, but simply spoken in a melancholy strain. I was glad I had not taken the liberty of sitting down on the ground beside her, but had stood listening all the time.

IX

NO, Hartvigsen cannot get over having become such a big man in the last year, his self-esteem assumes more and more extravagant dimensions. There is only himself and nobody else in the place, only himself and nobody else who is God Almighty for the whole district.

This folly made him stupid and tiresome; but his native kindliness was still great. He gave Steen the store clerk the following orders: "If supposing Lightkeeper Schöning wants anything from the store then it's all to be put down to me, B. Hartwich, just the same as if it was a mistake." To me he explained frankly that without the Lightkeeper's intervention he would not have grown rich over selling the silver rocks, and he wished to show his gratitude for it. In the same way he gave all possible credit to Aron of the Hope, the man who had sold him the rocks for almost nothing.

Oh, but Lightkeeper Schöning asked for nothing on credit; when he came to the store it was with his coppers in his hand.

One day Hartvigsen said to him:

"If so be you want any goods here they're not to be paid for."

The Lightkeeper stood there shrivelled up and gave us all a little glance.

Hartvigsen went on:

"For you can just say it's to go down to me!"

At last the Lightkeeper answered: "But that's no payment? And can't I just as well pay for my own goods?"

At this answer Hartvigsen did not show himself a greater man, but a smaller and a meaner. He said:

"Well, well, I meant it for a charity."

But when the Lightkeeper began to laugh at him and shook his grey head and even gave a long spit, Hartvigsen got very angry and called him an idiot and bustled out of the store.

And he did not forget the Lightkeeper's insulting refusal, but worried over it continually, though he said it was all one to him. "I suppose you'll be getting so proud too that you'll refuse me one day," he would say to Rosa. And when she wagged her head at this and refused to discuss it, he said in a hurt tone: "All right, you can do as you please."

In the evening he was fond of telling us what he had done in the course of the day and often this was anything but important. He had a way of going about and meddling in all kinds of trifles, taking up his men's time simply to show himself the master. He said to the upper-miller when he met him on the road: "I was just coming up to you. To-day you'll have to give us all the flour you can." But of

course this was only what the miller did every day, milling all the corn he was able. However, he answered obediently: "It shall be done." "For I've just come from the warehouse; there's no more than twenty sacks SF in stock," says Hartvigsen.

He said to me: "Come along out to the drying grounds." We rowed across and Hartvigsen felt the fish and was the owner of it and asked questions of Arn Drier: "Has it struck you that we may have rain any time to wet the fish again? If you haven't enough men just let me know." But Arn Drier only answered that he had men enough but that the sun was only so-so, the drying had to take its time. Hartvigsen said: "Well, now I've made up my mind that we're to have the fish flattened out before the dog days." And although Arn Drier knew this very well he clapped his hands together with a show of surprise. Then Hartvigsen had to explain to him how it had been in former years, that last year the fish was packed and the vessels had sailed for the South before the dog days, and so it had been the year before and every year. Oh, Arn Drier had to give in, he had no chance to escape. But Hartvigsen walked on over the rocks with me and said: "No, that Mack, he only stays in the office and writes, but all that concerns keeping an eye on everything and worrying with all the workpeople, that falls upon me. It looks like I shan't even have time to get married."

The peaceful daily life made Rosa calm and beau-

tiful; she often took Martha by the hand and went with her to see the Baroness's children and spent long hours with them on the rocks. In these hours I knew I was safe indoors and devoted myself again to my secret practising which I have mentioned once before. I shut the doors and windows to deaden the sound; every quarter of an hour I went out to watch if anyone was coming; then I went in again and was absorbed in my own work. Oh, Rosa was to be the first to find out what it was; I won't write it down yet either.

She was so upright and so gentle. When she saw that Hartvigsen was trying to make a secret of his little lessons with me she left the room to us and went out to do her shopping at the store. She behaved in just the same way in the evening when we were chatting about one thing or another; she was a well-bred lady and bore with us when we talked a lot of nonsense; she also bore patiently with Hartvigsen when he was coarse. Hartvigsen had such a curious way of talking. Since he had become a mighty man he never kept his mouth shut about things he did not understand, but on the contrary came out with expressions the like of which I had never heard. Oh, what a lot of things seemed to dwell in his brain! He talked about the Sea of Life and dressed out his words most strangely: "Luther—ah, he was the big clipper on this Sea of Life. Well, I don't know, but that's how I look at

it with my simple wits." And it must have been a magnificently sound and durable faith, the faith he had!

And what could Rosa answer to this? that, Ah yes, Luther, what a man! And she never moved a muscle.

Then one day Hartvigsen announced that perhaps I should soon have to go.

This happened the day after I had been sitting on the door-step in the evening chatting with Rosa and the child, and it was the child I talked to most. Then Hartvigsen came home. "Sit down here with us," said Rosa for fun. But Hartvigsen was hungry and went in. We three followed. Hartvigsen appeared to have come from Sirilund and perhaps someone had put him out. After supper he asked Rosa suddenly:

"Well, have you thought that the summer is pretty near over? And whether we're going to get married now or not?"

Rosa cast a terrified look at me.

"Ah, it isn't anything to do with the student," said Hartvigsen.

I shook my head with a smile, said No and went out. I stayed out till Hartvigsen himself came and asked me in again. Rosa was sitting in the room. She must have wanted to make it up to me for having to go out and therefore found something to say:

"My father would like you to pay him a visit.

You must not forget that. The original idea was that you should go with me across the common, but . . ."

"Oh," Hartvigsen broke in. "So perhaps you're going across the common?"

"No," she replied, "I'm staying here."

"I only wanted to know," Hartvigsen went on with irritation. "You're welcome to a boat to take you over for that matter," he said to me with a look of kindness.

"I would rather walk," I replied.

We all talked more calmly after that, but I saw very well that Hartvigsen was on his guard against me and that I must not say very much. So I held my tongue. Perhaps somebody had made him suspect me, how could I tell?

Little Martha came up to my knees with a toy and said: "My brother has broken it!" I fitted it together and promised to glue it in the morning; Rosa came and leaned down and looked on; the whole thing lasted a minute and perhaps Rosa said a word or two about the toy. Then Hartvigsen got up suddenly and left the room.

That was last night. This morning Hartvigsen came and hinted that I should have to go soon. "Very well," I answered. But I had begun a new painting of his houses with the common in the background; all this he had forgotten.

"You see, the servant's to come and stay with us

for good, so we want the rooms," said Hartvigsen by way of excuse.

I took it lightly so as not to add to his suspicions, but at the same time I was sadly put out.

"There was that picture," I said.

"You must finish that first," said Hartvigsen, relieved that I showed no other sign of trouble. "Of course you must get the picture done."

It was early in the day and I wanted the afternoon light for my picture, so I still had a couple of hours to myself. I strolled over to Sirilund.

X

THE Baroness said to me:

"I am so glad you are talking to the children and teaching them one thing and another."

"That will have to stop now," I replied; "I am going away."

The Baroness thrust her head forward.

"Going away? Are you?"

"I have still something to do to a picture, I am painting a little. Then I am going."

"Where will you go?"

"I have a friend in Utvær and Os district; I am going to him."

"A friend? Is he older than you?"

"Yes, he's two years older."

"Is he a painter?"

"No, a sportsman. He is a student too. He and I are going on a ramble."

When the Baroness left me she was very preoccupied.

In the afternoon as I stood painting the Baroness came and talked to me, and then it was that her hand gave a powerful turn to my destiny: she asked nothing less than that I should move over to Sirilund

and for the future be companion and tutor to her little girls.

I stopped my painting then and there and trembled at her words, for I had good reason to rejoice at being permitted to stay awhile longer in this place, nay, I had desired it of God in solitude. I asked to be allowed to think it over and to this she acceded. She said:

"And you are not to teach the children very much at present, as they are so small, but only chat with them and take them about. Oh, I will beg you to make them better than I am, they are such little dears! And you yourself, of course, shall have your good salary."

I might have said Yes on the spot, as I was full of pure joy; but instead of that I said:

"It depends on what my friend says. For now our ramble will come to nothing."

The Baroness turned and said as she left me:

"The little girls talk about you, they pray for you at night. It was their own idea to pray for you. Yes, I said when they told me, do so by all means."

The Baroness came to me the day after about the same matter and I had made up my mind. As it did not become me to assume an air of importance I introduced the subject myself with due respect and said Yes at once: that I had thought over her kind offer and accepted it gratefully.

She gave me her hand and we were agreed.

When I had finished my painting for the day I

tising the piano on the quiet; if she thought it worth listening to I was grateful. I said no more, my emotion was running away with me. But afterwards I was very glad that I had not been such a softy as to say I was playing a farewell. I went and packed my bag.

I waited till Hartvigsen came home.

"Well, well, I never meant that you should leave me," he said. "I have all manner of jobs for you, but . . ."

Martha distracted his attention by telling him that I had been playing—the student had been playing.

"Oh, can you play too?" asked Hartvigsen.

Rosa answered:

"Yes, *he* can play!"

These words made me prouder than all the praise I had received in my life and I said good-bye and left Hartvigsen's house with my heart full of gratitude. Oh, I flung forward in my great emotion and scarcely saw the road at all though my eyes were fixed on it.

Now I came to Sirilund and stayed there. The move did not involve any great change in my life; I strolled about with the little girls and drew pictures for them and painted one thing and another. And my mistress the Baroness neither said nor did more than became a well-bred woman, no indeed, she did nothing inelegant or low. She only pre-

served the habit of making a gateway of her arms within which she stood, and that looked strangely beautiful. At table she behaved well, only now and then she placed both elbows on the table when putting food into her mouth or drinking from a cup.

I wanted to paint the interior of Mack's drawing-room; it was to be a fine picture with one of the big silver angels in the corner and two engravings on the wall above the piano. But none of the things in this house interested me, except Rosa's claret glass which she had left standing on the table. It should stand there again, red and lonely in the afternoon light, as though gradually fading out.

And here at this great trading-station there was more life and movement than at Hartvigsen's house; here one might even see foreign skippers who were driven in by bad weather in the North Sea, and among them was once a Russian with whom I talked French as well as I was able. He lay windbound in our bay for many days with his big ship. The Baroness and I went aboard her, and he bought some bear-skins and blue fox-skins which Rosa's father had to sell.

As I had now got myself clothes more fitted for my station I could go about wherever I pleased and this made me feel happy. I went now and then into the store and watched the people coming and going, local folks and strangers, passers-by who bought bread from the bakery and hurried on again or

tising the piano on the quiet; if she thought it worth listening to I was grateful. I said no more, my emotion was running away with me. But afterwards I was very glad that I had not been such a softy as to say I was playing a farewell. I went and packed my bag.

I waited till Hartvigsen came home.

"Well, well, I never meant that you should leave me," he said. "I have all manner of jobs for you, but . . ."

Martha distracted his attention by telling him that I had been playing—the student had been playing.

"Oh, can you play too?" asked Hartvigsen.

Rosa answered:

"Yes, *he* can play!"

These words made me prouder than all the praise I had received in my life and I said good-bye and left Hartvigsen's house with my heart full of gratitude. Oh, I flung forward in my great emotion and scarcely saw the road at all though my eyes were fixed on it.

Now I came to Sirilund and stayed there. The move did not involve any great change in my life; I strolled about with the little girls and drew pictures for them and painted one thing and another. And my mistress the Baroness neither said nor did more than became a well-bred woman, no indeed, she did nothing inelegant or low. She only pre-

served the habit of making a gateway of her arms within which she stood, and that looked strangely beautiful. At table she behaved well, only now and then she placed both elbows on the table when putting food into her mouth or drinking from a cup.

I wanted to paint the interior of Mack's drawing-room; it was to be a fine picture with one of the big silver angels in the corner and two engravings on the wall above the piano. But none of the things in this house interested me, except Rosa's claret glass which she had left standing on the table. It should stand there again, red and lonely in the afternoon light, as though gradually fading out.

And here at this great trading-station there was more life and movement than at Hartvigsen's house; here one might even see foreign skippers who were driven in by bad weather in the North Sea, and among them was once a Russian with whom I talked French as well as I was able. He lay windbound in our bay for many days with his big ship. The Baroness and I went aboard her, and he bought some bear-skins and blue fox-skins which Rosa's father had to sell.

As I had now got myself clothes more fitted for my station I could go about wherever I pleased and this made me feel happy. I went now and then into the store and watched the people coming and going, local folks and strangers, passers-by who bought bread from the bakery and hurried on again or

fishing crews from the South who haunted the spirit-counter all day long and afterwards filled the roads with their drunken noise.

Of the people who belonged to Sirilund almost all had a nickname. There was Sven Watchman and Man Ole, but they were skippers of two of the vessels, so there was nothing much said about them. But then there was Bramaputra who was Man Ole's wife, and she was so free and easy with strangers that her husband had to keep an eye on her continually. But for that matter another of the same sort was Ellen who had once been parlourmaid, but who had married Sven Watchman the year before; she was in love with one man in this world—Mack himself; and it was a sight to see her forlorn face when he looked at her or went up to her in the yard and said a word or two. Oh, but the place was full of people with nicknames: Jens Bairnsfather, the Hookmaker, and finally a vagabond who had come during the winter and been set to chopping wood in the shed; he had such short legs that they never called him anything but Heavytop.

It interested me greatly to watch Lightkeeper Schöning when he came shuffling into the store to make his little purchases. He was a man of boundless obstinacy but of great experience. He had travelled and thought a great deal and there was much originality in what he had to say; but he would only talk when he was in the mood for it, otherwise he maintained a lofty silence. One day a man from

the neighbourhood had come to the store with a horse and cart; the horse stood there with a long nose-bag hanging just below its eyes; it had finished eating, the bag was empty and the horse simply stood with its head up and looked out over the bag. When the Lightkeeper saw it he said: "That horse is veiled like a Mahometan woman!" By questioning him nicely and quietly I then got him to tell me a few things about distant lands.

At last, in late summer, Sir Hugh Trevelyan came back to Sirilund on business, and his business was to sample the best cognac Mack had in his cellar and buy himself a supply for drinking. He packed a few bottles in a knapsack, hired a man to carry it and took his departure. They walked far out over the rocks, out to the boundless cloudberry bogs, where Sir Hugh stayed for several days drinking cognac until he grew sadly stiff about the eyes and senseless about the head. His porter came twice to Sirilund to fetch more cognac; when he came the third time Mack looked at him, shook his head and said No. The porter made a humble attempt to ask again, but Mack repeated his No once more and said not a word beyond it. And indeed Sir Hugh suffered severely out there in the bogs; he lay in the open at night and ate nothing but a few cloudberries which his porter collected in his hat. On the fourth day Mack sent Sven Watchman and another man out to the bogs with plenty of good food for the English stranger.

And as Mack dealt with Sir Hugh, so did he deal with his own people; to all he was a master. Although no doubt it was Hartvigsen and not Mack who had most money in the great business, it was Mack who enjoyed most respect and esteem. I discovered that in many ways Mack had an excessively bad name; but as he was the born master he could defy all impertinence and interference. Every one knew that he was a terrible genius with the girls and an out-and-out rascal, that was his nature. There were rumours about his warm baths, that he lay on a featherbed in the water, that he sometimes took his baths several times a week when he had a sort of violent fit that way, and that he would have not only one but two of the maids with him when he had a bath. So he must have been a wild libertine. Once, I heard, Bramaputra had let out that it was by no means the rule for Mack himself to take the bath, but that he made the girls take it while he looked on. Now Mack had got little Petrine for his parlourmaid and he was just waiting till she was old enough according to law, in fact she stood in his garden growing for his benefit. But maybe she had long been old enough for herself and Mack, for she had such a wonderful figure and a joyous laugh. Her nose had such a riotous upward turn; the Lightkeeper said one day that her nose stood on tip-toe.

XI

IT was evening, the little girls had gone to bed; I walked out thinking in a desultory way of one thing and another. It was warm and sunny. In a green meadow lay all the cows of Sirilund chewing the cud; all I heard was now and then a little tinkle of a bell when one of the cows threw its head back after midgets, otherwise all was quiet. I went up to a cow and spoke to her softly and she seemed to like it, though she did not look at me; she only sighed and went on chewing steadily and staring before her. Oh, how she stared! She only blinked at long intervals and then stared on endlessly.

I went down to the quays. There were still a few men at work this fine evening; the copper, Villads the wharfinger, and one or two more were hanging on to tackles and putting up a new signboard on the warehouse wall; on the board was painted: MACK & HARTWICH. I got into a boat and sculled out from the shore to see how the board looked. Underneath the new sign was the old one with its lettering freshened up: Salt and Barrels in stock. But all by itself on the white wall was a black hand pointing downward. This was in very poor taste,

this severed hand dropping down the wall had such an ugly look.

I sculled in again and met Hartvigsen on the quay. "As I was saying, it's me that has to superintend and take charge of every blessed thing," he said. "Now they're putting up this sign, but does it stand clear and can they see it from the mail boat?"

"There's a hand painted on the wall and it ought not to be there," I said.

"Oh, do you think that? It's the Hookmaker that painted the whole thing; he said there would have to be a hand just the same as they have in the big towns. What do you think of the letters?"

"They are very good."

"Ah, you think so. Ay, ay, now I've got my name changed; it looks quite funny to see it painted up. It's not my whole name, for Benoni is what I was christened in the clear water of baptism, and when I put a B that's good enough. And now it's cost me a lot of good money to get my name up alongside of Mack's. But I don't worry about that."

Hartvigsen asked me to scull him out into the bay so that he could see his sign. While we were lying out there the thought occurred to me that after all it was rather unreasonable of Mack to take money privately for adding his partner's name to his own. Why should it cost money? But Hartvigsen did not worry about it. So he must be so boundlessly

rich, that man, that it made no difference to him. And no longer ago than last spring he had had another heavy expense, running perhaps into thousands: the payment of Rosa's husband for agreeing to a divorce. But nothing of this concerned me.

Hartvigsen called out to the cooper and Villads:

"Paint out that hand again to-morrow."

"Are we to paint it out?"

"Yes, I won't have it there."

So we sculled in to the shore again and Hartvigsen said to me:

"There you see, if I hadn't come out and settled it that hand would have been left there on the wall. What was I going to say? You like being at Sirilund?"

"Yes, thanks."

"You had no call to leave me. Now Martha's getting a big girl, I'll have to have a tutor for her."

I objected that Martha could go to the ordinary day-school when the time came; but Hartvigsen shook his head at this:

"You see, it's this way," he answered; "the child has learnt to curtsy and she's learnt many good ways since she came to us. So I must have a tutor for her."

I then suggested that Martha could go to school later on with the Baroness's children; but this arrangement was not to Hartvigsen's liking either.

"I'm not so hard up as to let the child come on the parish," said he.

As we walked homeward and came to Hartvigsen's house he asked me in. Rosa was sitting on the doorstep and we sat down beside her; a little chat followed; she made such kind and gentle answers to my questions about her health. Hartvigsen asked me straight out to move back to his house and be Martha's tutor; as I could not possibly agree to this he was deeply offended. Rosa said nothing.

"Well, well, you needn't trouble to believe more than half what our good Edvarda says," said Hartvigsen with a significant nod. "For you may be sure she's a pretty queer element, as far as that goes. I say no more."

As he received no answer to this Hartvigsen abandoned all caution and went on:

"Her husband shot himself last winter!"

Rosa turned red in the face and looked down. "No, Benoni!" she said.

"You can take that from me!" Hartvigsen continued, proud of his exclusive information.

But Rosa too seemed to have heard the news before, though she asked:

"Where did you hear that? I'm sure it's only a tale. You shouldn't say such things."

Hartvigsen told us that he had it from someone who had read it in the papers last winter, and this was none other than the Sheriff's officer. So it was sure enough. Edvarda herself had had to appear in court about the affair.

How pure and good Rosa was at this moment!

I saw quite well that the guilty news was old and familiar to her; but even in the worst days of her jealousy she had not taken advantage of it. I could have fallen at her feet; that was the place for me, that was also the place for Hartvigsen.

Hitherto I had said nothing; but when Rosa remarked that Edvarda's husband might have shot himself in delirium I nodded agreement. Then Hartvigsen flung at me the following words in great annoyance:

"Well, well, pleasant journey to you and her! But what she said to me was that you were an insignificant person. So now you know it!"

And Rosa, seeing no doubt that she could not keep him quiet any more, rose from the doorstep and went in.

I had a strong feeling of resentment and could not refrain from asking:

"Did she say that?"

"A well-brought-up and insignificant person, those were her words."

Hartvigsen took good care to let me feel the thrust; he too got up and began to feed the doves, though it was late in the evening.

I wandered away from the house, past the green meadow with the cows and far beyond the mill, to the woods, to the distant hills. My self-respect was deeply wounded: so all my good manners amounted only to an insignificant quality in the eyes of my mistress. I tried to make light of it: just so,

that is what the Baroness says, but that doesn't settle the matter, the sky is not going to fall on me! Oh, but I was dreadfully unhappy. I had my good manners and they were all I possessed in the world. I was no seductive youth, my appearance was lanky and, to tell the truth, I had no good looks; on the contrary, my face was covered with pimples. For this reason I had been obedient to my parents and acquired much learning and had made myself proficient in drawing and painting. But I must confess that when I gave myself out to be a brave sportsman there was more boasting than truth in my words; I was no sportsman and rover like Friar Vendt, but it was my intention to go out with him and learn his reckless ways.

All this I thought as I walked on and on till I was immensely tired. My instinct had led me into the thickest part of the woods as though to hide; I was now faced by a thicket of osiers into which I determined to creep on all fours in order to come far in and then sit down in peace. I felt as it were a spell upon me, yea, as though God urged me on, that I might help Him in some way in my unworthiness.

It was a sort of little path trodden by beasts along which I was crawling; where the path came to an end I found myself in a little round space with a waterhole. I rose to my feet in surprise and looked, and the place looked back at me. Never had I stood in a place so small and round; it was as though

some being had its abode here in the water, but had now risen into the air and taken the roof with it.

When my first surprise had passed I began to take pleasure in the dead stillness of this place; the light came from above as though through a funnel and no one could see me unless from the air. This is good! I thought. As the tiny pond was so low I sat down to make myself friendly and small beside it. Here were midges; I noticed that each particular midge might begin a little way off and then contrive so that it came into the dance with the other midges. The surface of the pool lay like a membrane, the midges alighted on it without wetting themselves, bog-cotton and other flying things scudded over it without leaving a trace. A busy little spider had gone to rest in its web on a branch.

I forgot that I was depressed and wounded in my self-respect, it was so good here. There was no right or left, but only a circumference; the osiers were there, the grassy floor was there, ancient and cramped was the place, it had lain there inheriting itself from generation to generation. And nothing would overtake me if I sat here neglecting Time, here were no hours and the only measure was a round waterhole with a close ring of osiers about it.

I was about to lie back and sleep, but checked myself and did not carry out my purpose: the spider had begun to stir, so then it expected rain. At the same moment I noticed that the pond was swept clear of midges and that its surface was streaked

like watered silk. I looked about me again and a strange feeling of discomfort came upon me, I discovered that somebody must lately have been on the other side of the little pond: some of the osiers had been lopped as though to clear a little space and the cuts were fresh, they had been done that day. I leapt over the pond, the bank shook a little though it was firm ground, my eye fell upon the cuts and I saw with a singular emotion that they had been made by an unpractised *left hand.* It must have been a tale I had heard recently which made me so observant. I picked up chips and turned them in every direction and convinced myself that I was right. Why—why cut down the osiers? And why these mystic cuts? I gazed again at this wall of osiers and a chill ran down my back: there was a stone image right in front of me, an old god.

Oh, how small and hideous it was, with no arms below its shoulders and nothing but wretched slits in its face for eyes, nose and mouth. The division between its legs was also nothing but a scored line and there were no feet, the image had to be propped up with stones.

I thought at first that this was the work God had for me this evening, to cast down this little idol and plunge it into the pond; but when my hand was about to perform its task there was no strength in it, but in its place a strange powerlessness. I looked at my hand; what could be the matter with it? A sort of withered look spread over the skin. Filled with

horror I looked from my hand to the little stone man; oh, it was a reproach to God to let oneself be put out by this creature! It looked just as if it had once been bigger, a long time ago, but had reached second childhood; it had shrunk to nothing as it stood there propped up by the stones around it. I raised my other hand against it, but the hand dropped, the same thing repeated itself, the skin of my left hand also turned grey and withered.

Then I leapt back over the pond and crawled out of the osier thicket again.

Great drops of rain were beginning to fall from the sky.

XII

A LETTER came to Sirilund from Rosa's parents, the clergyman of the neighbouring parish and his wife, and it was a wedding invitation. For the second time Pastor Barfod was to marry his daughter. Ah, then everything was in order for this solemnity; I had already heard a rumour that the banns had been put up in the churches of both parishes. But latterly Hartvigsen had been secretive about the wedding, as is the way of peasants; not a word had he said about it. Well, God's will be done!

There was incessant rain at this time and the journey was to be made in Mack's white houseboat; but as little Tonna, one of the Baroness's little girls, was unwell, both the children were to be left at home. So I could not accept the invitation either. The Baroness spoke to me very kindly and offered to stay at home herself so that I might go; but that was too absurd for discussion. Martha was also to stay behind with the little girls and me.

The wedding was a quiet one, because the bride had been married before so recently; oh, the wedding was far too quiet for the bridegroom's taste,

he would have invited all the people round and made a banquet to be talked of.

Hartvigsen said to me when he came home:

"I'd have been pleased if you had come to my wedding."

I thanked him and replied that it had been impossible for various reasons. In the first place I was a servant and my mistress had had an invitation herself. In the second place I had no dress clothes and my poor despised good manners told me that no other costume was possible on such an occasion.

That was my answer. Perhaps Hartvigsen would pass on my second excellent reason, and I had no objection to his doing so. I heard later, by the way, that Hartvigsen had swaggered about at the wedding in sledging boots with wolfskin tops to impress the traders from the skerries. When some one called his attention to the ridiculousness of this on a summer's day Hartvigsen replied: "I don't care what Mack does or doesn't do. If my feet are cold I put on fur-lined boots. I have all kinds!"

Now Rosa was a married woman for the second time. I went to her house punctually at twelve o'clock and made my congratulations; she took my hand and thanked me smilingly. She filled our glasses with wine and I stayed sitting with her; she told me something about Gilbert the Lapp having appeared at the church door and how sinister she thought it. While she was talking about this Hart-

vigsen came home. He smiled with a mysterious air and drank with us.

Then Hartvigsen took out of his pocket a parcel with many seals on it; he was proud and pleased, chuckling to himself.

"Here's something I've just got by post," he said. "It's come a day too late, but never mind."

He opened the packet and found a ring which he put on Rosa's finger.

"There's the ring," he said. "Don't throw it away again."

Rosa's face underwent a change. "No," she said quietly. And she took him by the hand and thanked him for it. The ring was a little too large. She took it off, looked at Hartvigsen's Christian name inside it and put it on again.

But the other contents of the package gave Hartvigsen no peace. "Perhaps there's something else here!" he said.

"Good Heavens! what can it be?" asked Rosa.

Then Hartvigsen showed us both the outside of the package and looked at us, mighty proud:

"There, you can read for yourselves. That ring there didn't cost more than four dollars with name and all; but here it says Value declared at one hundred and ten dollars!"

Hartvigsen was trying to put us on the rack. As I made as though I would leave the room and not witness any more, he asked me to keep my seat.

"Turn your backs!" he said.

I heard something jingle, he went up to Rosa and said solemnly:

"Allow me, Rosa. I hand you herewith the following gold watch and chain!"

Rosa's eyes opened wide with surprise, she stammered and sat down. Oh, how charming was her confusion and how it came from the heart, she was red and pale by turns. When she rose and thanked him for it all he was himself overwhelmed. "Long may you wear it!" he said.

Then he took the watch back to wind and set it; he was like a child with it and sat there with the eyes of a child. As I left the newly married couple I said to myself that this was such a cordial beginning, perhaps after all it might be a good thing that Rosa had come into this house. Well, then there was no more to be said about it, happiness had come to Rosa!

Days went by, sunshine and warmth returned. The night air was tinted red and the sea birds went for walks on the beach with their young. It was nevertheless a lonely time for me and I could not go to Rosa's and Hartvigsen's house every day, nor was it any great pleasure to me to do so now. The Baroness did not care for any music nor for me either, so I only played a little in the daytime when Mack was in his office and the Baroness out of the room. At other times I went for walks with the little girls, like the sea birds with their young.

But sometimes we had capital fun when the little

girls found me lying on the grass and overpowered me and sat upon me to keep me well down. Then I would turn over gently and spill them off; they jumped up again and put tremendous force into holding me, little Tonna made herself so heavy that she turned red in the face. They thought it a particularly good trick to get hold of my nose, but they never pulled my hair. Now and then they stroked my face to get rid of the pimples and they rubbed me with spittle and with sea water so that my skin often appeared much redder than it was. They were exceedingly good children. But latterly they had taken it into their heads in the way of children to make new friends; they had begun to keep Jens Bairnsfather company when he was out on his business of collecting bones. They always asked their mamma's permission before going on these rambles. "Oh yes, let them go," said the Baroness; "when the winter comes it will be time for them to do some lessons." She was good to the children and they in return were very fond of her. They might say little things like this: "Wait a bit, mamma, I want to come and be fond of you, mamma!" And then the strong thin Baroness held them aloft in her arms.

Oh, that strange and scandalous Baroness Edvarda! And perhaps she was more misguided and unhappy than any woman I have met; I don't know, I have not met many.

It was late one evening. I had no peace; I had

been at Rosa's a little while and witnessed a quiet, almost mute disagreement between her and her husband. It was so uncomfortable; Hartvigsen hardly said anything and Rosa replied by keeping silence. As I hastened away from the house a sad, helpless look followed me to the door.

I roamed away to the woods again full of thoughts, I went up to the hills and made for my old place with the pond and the little heathen stone man. I was crawling again on all fours along the path through the osier thicket when I stopped abruptly; there were people here before me. They did not speak, they were bathing, without a stitch on their bodies, in the middle of the little pond, both of them. I saw at once that the woman was Baroness Edvarda; the man I did not recognize at first, his hair was parted in the middle and hung down on both sides, long and wet. Then I saw by his clothes lying on the bank that it was Gilbert the Lapp.

They were bathing, they dipped into the water together, he held his arm around her. I lay as though petrified and stared at them; now and again they stood right up and looked at each other, but there was no sight in their eyes, they panted in ecstasy; at last they carried each other as it were out of the pond and up to the little clearing. The Lapp remained standing; he was panting and the water streamed from his hair. The Baroness sat down, tucked her legs under her, laid her cheek on

one knee and let her eyes roam. She was waiting to see what he would do with her. Then he sat down beside her—oh, now they were both wild, I cannot mention what they did; I wanted to scream, but remained dumb; the little idol and I were witnesses and I was speechless as it.

I found myself making my way backwards out of the thicket and I suppose I must have moved cautiously by instinct; no sound was heard from the two by the pond but a faint song of weariness. There was sickness and infirmity in it; it even sounded like a squeaking from the idol itself. So those two people must have been lying before the god and this squeaking was the best song of which they were capable.

On my way home I had a sort of fever all over me, though it was sunny and warm. In my walk through the woods there must have been branches that struck me, but I felt nothing and remembered nothing. On the other hand, as I came to the wood by the mill I noticed that the Hookmaker was standing there with his bird-call in his mouth and that he deceived the little birds into waking up and answering him. I was responsible for Hartvigsen's having the pointing hand on the warehouse wall painted out, so I supposed the Hookmaker would bear me a grudge for it and would go on playing contemptuously as I passed. I walked straight up to him and was going to ask: why haven't you gone to bed tonight? When I came near enough he stopped his

warbling, took off his cap and greeted me. I therefore chose other words and asked:

"Are you out warbling so late as this?"

"Yes," he answered.

"Aren't you going to bed?"

"No. I'm on duty, the mill's working."

"But there are two millers, aren't there?"

"Oh, yes."

I was full of my discovery in the woods and thought: perhaps he is keeping a sort of watch for the Baroness. And I let fall the remark: "Ah, yes, there's good need of a watch here!"

The Hookmaker glanced at me and saw by my thoughtful look that there must be something behind my words. Suddenly he said, looking this way and that:

"I see you know about it."

I did not choose to be this man's confederate in anything, but it was in vain that I asserted I knew nothing; he pointed behind him and said:

"There it lies."

"What lies there? Feathers? What is all this?" I went nearer, the Hookmaker came behind me chuckling and explained: yes, this was his little watch, he came up here three, sometimes four times a week and dried feathers on this sailcloth. Well, it was nothing to be ashamed of; Sven Watchman who was now a big man and a skipper had once had this job; somebody had to do it. But oh, what a

hard case and a rakehell that Mack was, taking his baths three and four times a week! But he was worse in the spring, every blessed day, clean daft! And he was still in his summer; God only knew when that man's winter would come! Perhaps never.

And I listened to this talk and collected my thoughts to ask:

"But how do you dry the feathers in wet weather?"

"Then I steal a chance to get into the wash-house at night. Ah, before my time there was no secret about it, they tell me; Sven Watchman he stood right out in the yard and dried his feathers in the sun and he could use the wash-house day or night if he liked. But since the Baroness came home the old man has had to mind himself, ha-ha."

Before I left him the worthy Hookmaker seemed impelled to make his occupation a little less contemptible in my sight, he joked about it and said:

"As I was saying, somebody's got to do it. And Mack, he chose me himself for it and called me into the office and offered me the job. He had got stomach trouble, he said, and had to bathe and rub himself all the time. So he says that as I had such a genius for twittering I could stay up here of nights among the birds and be taken for a queer fellow if anybody came along. Ha-ha, it takes an uncommon good brain to think of a thing like that. And then the baths! It's Ellen who's married to Sven

Watchman and the kid Petrine who give him the rubbing now."

When I came down to Sirilund there was Man Ole having an altercation with Heavytop about Bramaputra, his wife. That crazy Bramaputra—now she was at it again! She was everywhere, stealing along from wall to wall and putting up an innocent face whatever she was caught at. "I wonder you're not ashamed!" I heard her say to the two men when she saw me coming. Man Ole saw and heard nothing, he spat and paced up and down; Heavytop on the other hand was leaning against the kitchen wall to have his back covered. There he stood on his short legs, like two stumps, and up above he was huge like a monstrous deformity.

The whole of that night was full of madness.

In the morning the Baroness was meek and friendly and she went about pale with quenched flames, tired, needing rest. She was positively afraid of hurting the feelings of any of us; she had again that helpless air of constraint as when she had said something hasty and perhaps put her foot in it.

XIII

BOTH the Baroness and Mack had remembered my birthday and given me various good presents; they must have found out the date from the children who had once asked me for it and to whom I could not lie. It gave me no particular pleasure that my birthday was noticed in this way; there was even wine at dinner and Mack addressed a few fatherly words to me about my having come among strangers. The little girls gave me pretty shells and pebbles that they had found on the beach and Alina had drawn a wonderful town for me on the lid of a big box. I put this picture up on my wall to please her. Little Tonna appointed me her big brother in a document which her mamma had written for her.

Summer was wearing on, the woods were streaked with red and yellow and the sky was high and pale. The fish was dry, the vessels lay waiting for a wind.

"If I'd only known of your birthday it shouldn't have been forgotten," Hartvigsen said to me in his droll, good-natured way. "Come on now and go home with me for a bit."

I was more than ready to go and was delighted also to find that Hartvigsen no longer bore me any

ill-will. We found Rosa at home and Hartvigsen made her fetch wine and cakes.

"I know you'll be only too pleased," he said jokingly; "the student's a man of education and I'm not."

Rosa made no answer to this, but looked pained.

As we sat over the wine and cakes Hartvigsen continued to chatter, as cheerful as could be, and kept asking: "What's your opinion about that, Rosa?" —"I don't know what you think, Rosa?"—"Oh yes," Rosa might answer, rather dully, or "What *I* think!" she might say, humbling herself as though what she thought was of no consequence. Suddenly Hartvigsen said in a serious tone:

"Ay ay, I know very well what makes your temper so unobliging. But you're not to worry about that."

Rosa said nothing and bent her head slightly.

"I saw little Martha at Sirilund," I remarked.

No answer.

"It's extraordinary what a lot of doves you've got this summer," I remarked again, looking out of the window.

"You're not to worry about it, I say!" thundered Hartvigsen, looking at Rosa with a frown.

She rose from her chair and moved over to the stove, where she stood for a moment, then sat down there and began to play with the door of the stove, examining the figures on it.

There was a knock at the door, Hartvigsen got

up and went out. I heard the Baroness's "Good-day," outside.

"Shall I play a little?" I asked, feeling frightfully uncomfortable.

"Yes, please."

As I went to the piano I saw through another window the Baroness and Hartvigsen walking away together.

I played a little of what came into my head; I was so profoundly miserable that I made many mistakes. When I stopped Rosa said:

"We might row out and fish if you like."

I looked at her. If she could go fishing with me it was more than she dared before; something must have happened to her, perhaps she had begun to assert herself.

Rosa got ready, we went down to the boat-house, took hooks and lines with us and rowed out. On the way I thought: what has been happening right before my eyes? was I asked to Rosa's house simply and solely to be left behind when Hartvigsen and the Baroness went out?

It was slack water, the bay was like a mirror. I tried telling a story of a merry fellow and a great boaster: he had been a sailor and was shipwrecked in a hurricane, but he did not drown; no, there were crowds of drowned sea-birds all around him, but he did not drown.

Let's see you laugh, I thought; but Rosa can't have been in the mood for laughter. So I laughed

myself at the sailor to help her a little with my gaiety.

I showed her how brightly the spoon-bait shone in the sun, and how when I let it down it was just like a candle that was extinguished by the water. "Yes," was all Rosa said.

How depressed she was! I was noticing her clothes, what a neat dress she had, of strong, plain cloth; she had worn the same in the spring before she was married. On the thwart lay her jacket and that too was far from new, but well looked after; the buttons were on the right side and the button-holes on the left, so it had been turned, I thought to myself, but that too had been beautifully done, she had sat and worked at it. Her eyes were so big and sad when she looked up, I felt as though a wave came towards me.

"Are your parents alive?" she asked.

"Yes."

"Have you a sister?"

"Yes."

"I have no brother." After a pause she added with a little smile: "Well, of course I have papa."

"Your father is an uncommonly handsome man."

"Yes, handsome and happy!" And again she smiled a little and said: "It is only I who have grieved him all my life."

The water began to ripple, the sun no longer gave much warmth, Rosa put on her jacket and took the handline again, while I used the spoon-bait. We

had caught some fish, but not enough for a whole dish, as they were so small; so we had to keep to it a while longer and Rosa sat very patiently. I wanted to ascertain whether perhaps she was filling up the time because she disliked going home; I said:

"Your ring was a little too big, take care it doesn't slip off your finger."

Oh, this gave her a good opportunity of answering in a careless way—well, let it slip off! But far from it, she instantly gave a start, her expression changed and she moved the line to her left hand.

An hour later we had enough for a dish and rowed in to land.

Hartvigsen had come home; he said to Rosa quite good-naturedly, but perhaps not without sarcasm:

"So you've begun to provide for the house? All right, perhaps the larder's empty, I don't know."

"Haven't we done well?" I put in.

"Nothing to complain about. Now I'll have to help you clean the fish, and then you must stay the evening and have some with us."

I stayed. Nothing particular happened, but the tone was not cordial and I felt uncomfortable all the evening. Hartvigsen found one or two things to do outside and left us alone; he stood a good while talking to a man in the road, then he scattered a measure of peas over the yard for the doves, which had already gone into their cote. From all this I guessed that his jealousy of me had passed off: I was not displeased at this, but Rosa did not seem

to like it. She busied herself putting things straight in the room and closed the lid of the piano as though absently. Evidently she did not wish that I should be tempted to offer to play to-night, I thought. That must have been it.

But I held out bravely with a little chat on general topics, though I was sore at heart. When Hartvigsen came in again I rose and took my leave.

As I walked home I made up my mind to be quick and finish my picture of Mack's drawing-room. And when I had got Rosa's claret glass really dainty and fine I would bring her the picture. Hartvigsen had already told me he was getting a lot of frame-mouldings when the vessels came home from Bergen.

One afternoon while I was painting at this picture the Baroness came in and surprised me by striking the religious note. What a state her unhappy nerves were in! She clutched at her bosom so that several hooks came unfastened; it was as though she would tear her heart out. She said:

"There is no peace in anything here. But perhaps you find peace?"

"I? Oh no."

"You don't? Then perhaps you really ought to go shooting. The close time will soon be over. You ought to fire a shot or two in the woods. It would freshen you up."

I thought: it is not me and my peace she is talking about; does she want to listen for my shots in

the woods and remember Glahn's shots of long ago?

"I had thought of going shooting when the black frosts come," I said.

She got up and wandered about the room, looked out of the windows, threw herself into a chair again and spoke some words in praise of my picture. But her thoughts were far away. I looked at her in pity; she had no place in my heart, but I wished her well in every way, there was so much that was sorrowful and erring in her.

"Not that I want to start talking of higher matters," she said; "but indeed I can't understand a single thing. And why should I go farther and farther astray, step by step? I played here as a child and laid my cheek against the blades of grass to show them I was kind. Yes. And after all that is not so long ago, it seems to me, not many generations ago. But what has come to the blades of grass and the roads and everything? I now look at them with other eyes; what then has come to me? The child is gone, of course. But there are people here who are still just the same, Jens Bairnsfather is the same inside, Gilbert the Lapp is the same. But I have developed, I am another person altogether. I am so wicked that I should laugh at myself if I laid my cheek against a blade of grass now. But Jens Bairnsfather and Gilbert the Lapp still go about with their childish fancies and cherish them with the same feelings. If I had married the man I loved and stayed here among the woods and paths I

might perhaps have still had peace, what do you think? It must be that Life itself has thrust me away into something hostile to myself, and why should Life do that? What I developed away from was better than what I received in compensation; I entered a rich, cultured home, it was not like the blades of grass and the paths here; I learned one thing and another, I got into a better way of talking—oh, the lame Doctor we once had here would not know me now! What then? There was one who talked just as incorrectly as I, but he gave me an inward flush of joy. When he made some mistake or came to a standstill and did not know how to express himself, I felt how good it was, how good it was, keep on like that, be at a loss again, oh! It showed he was no cleverer than I and of another race. We both knew the blades of grass and some dozen people and they in turn knew us; we saw each other's tracks on the paths and in the grass and threw ourselves upon them and kissed them. A shot away on the hill, a puff of smoke from the treetops, Æsop is there in the distance, I hear his glad whimpering—what do I do? Caress the leaves, stroke a juniper bush and kiss my hand for doing it. Beloved! I whisper and a thrill goes through me as of many violins. I take out my breasts and hold them towards him to make him some return for the shot he has sent me. My life is his, I cannot see for emotion, the path surges about me, I fall down. Only when I guess he is coming and feel the cur-

rent from him do I rise to my feet and wait for him. And then he can say nothing, what is there to say? But I know where there is a bosom to rest upon as upon a whole world of good, and his breath wraps me round, the breath of a wild creature."

The Baroness halted for a moment in her distracted speech. I had finished painting, the sun had left Rosa's glass.

"Stop for to-day and come out with me," said the Baroness.

I cleared away my things and went with her. She gave me the impression of such bitter need and I tried to do her good by small attentions. On this walk I remember she grew calmer after she had said:

"O God, how brutal life is, how one creature devours another. We cut off the head of a hen and devour her, we seize upon a little pig and kill it and devour it. We trample the flowers to death in the meadows. We make children cry, they turn their eyes and look at us and cry at us. Oh, how I am sick with disgust of life!"

"And yet perhaps it is better than death."

"Yes, and yet perhaps it is better than death. You said something there, perhaps it is better than death."

XIV

BEFORE the vessels sailed I made the acquaintance one evening of Sven Watchman who was married to Ellen Parlourmaid. Now his colleague and fellow-skipper Man Ole was to take his wife with him in the *Funtus* as cook; it was a good arrangement, as he would be able to keep his dear Bramaputra under strict observation. Sven Watchman's wife on the other hand could not accompany her husband in his boat, she pleaded her child who was far too small to be taken to sea.

Perhaps Sven Watchman had once been more suspicious of his wife than now. The story was told that one Christmas Eve he had tried to kill her with a long knife; now he calmly left her behind while he himself sailed away for months. Hartvigsen said of him that he had grown so hardened, by which I suppose he meant blunted. I had often seen Ellen cling to her husband and raise her lips to his with tender infidelity, and it was nothing but tricks, Sven Watchman took no heed of it. She was in the habit of coming from Mack's bath late at night and would look at any one she met with heavy, drowsy eyes and go past. There was no shame in her, her ways in Mack's house were so well known to all and Sven

Watchman himself only looked up unconcernedly and went on smoking his pipe. Perhaps it had cost him many a pang to arrive at this calm; once he had wanted to stick a knife into her, that was long ago, that was in the beginning—now it was very different. Why should he bring penal servitude upon himself? Such things might be done, of course, a man might commit a crime for love; but there was also another way—to let oneself be blunted and so keep within the bounds of law and virtue. Both courses were strong and good, each in its way.

While I stood chatting with Sven Watchman about his forthcoming trip and other things Hartvigsen came out of the office. Long before he came up to us he said, pointing over his shoulder:

"I've just been in there and made a pot of money."

"Good luck to you with it!" said Sven Watchman. These two men were always good friends.

Hartvigsen went on:

"Ah, it was only off my own partner, but it's just as good for all that. We've drawn up a document about it."

It came out that Hartvigsen had personally taken over the insurance on the vessels and cargoes for the Bergen voyage. For all these years the sharp and clever Mack had been careful and insured well, but never an accident had happened; so this year Hartvigsen had put in his oar and objected to this great and stupid expense. As a careful man of business

Mack knew of no alternative. "The only thing would be for you privately to undertake the insurance, Hartwich," he said.

Then of course Hartvigsen swelled with self-esteem and he became a prodigy in his own eyes and those of Mack. He had the power, it cost him but a word. And he spoke the word.

That was in the summer. The agreement had held till this evening, when it was put into writing; the document was to be registered at the autumn sessions.

"So now I expect it of you, Sven Watchman, that you sail your new ship safely to Bergen and home again!" said Hartvigsen solemnly.

Sven Watchman answered:

"I shall try. It's not my good will that'll be wanting."

Hartvigsen continued:

"And I expect the same of Man Ole with the schooner. It's true he's got womenfolk aboard; but I'm not so ignorant as to let that worry me."

At that moment Mack left his office. He nodded to us and Sven Watchman and I took off our hats.

"Good-night," said Hartvigsen with studied nonchalance, to show us that he could treat Mack in a different fashion.

A little while after Ellen crossed the yard. She had evidently seen Mack leave the office and waited the proper time. Hartvigsen and Sven Watchman exchanged a glance. But Hartvigsen was such a

mighty man, he had insured his vessels with himself, he wanted to meddle with other matters and he had his comment to make:

"Now he's ready for his tepid water again," he said; "the devil knows what to make of my partner!"

"That's so," said Sven Watchman in reply and went on smoking.

"But I'll tell you what, Sven Watchman, you ought to think it beneath your wife to be rubbing him so constantly."

"What? Oh, she'll have to do as she pleases," answered Sven Watchman, knocking out his pipe.

"Well, all right," Hartvigsen agreed, no doubt feeling sorry for his skipper. "But she's neglecting the child. Ay ay, I dare say it's only little acts of neighbourly charity, I don't know."

But to me Hartvigsen said more as we walked together down to his house:

"I shall have to see and square things up with my partner, I'm the only one to do it. He has not one but two with him in the bath and you needn't think they're rubbing him all the time. No, he's clean crazy, he hugs them. I won't hear of it any longer."

It was a long time since I had seen Rosa and I was glad to find her brisk and well. As his habit had been lately, Hartvigsen left us this evening again and went out of the room. Rosa talked more cheerfully and was more at her ease.

"Thanks, we're going on just as usual," she said. "And you are all well at Sirilund? It is a good while since I was there. How do you find Edvarda?"

"I couldn't have a better mistress. And the children are wonderful."

"It's extraordinary how you have grown this summer," she said to me:

And when she said I had grown I was glad and proud of it; I felt myself blushing and looked out of the window.

"How those two cock pigeons eye one another all the time," I took it into my head to say.

"What, are they out now?"

"Hartvigsen is feeding them. The two cocks can't bear one another, they're spinning round like tops."

Rosa came up to the window to look, she came straight up to me and stood close to me. A kind and tender womanliness proceeded from her. Quite gently she leaned a little further forward to get a side view of the yard, supporting herself on the window; her hand was big and beautiful. I had a feeling that she was not looking out of the window the whole time, but threw a glance down at my head, over my neck and throat, I felt her breath. Oh, perhaps I ought to have moved to make room for her, but it was delicious to sit still.

"They are jealous of one another," I said of the cock pigeons. And what more did I say? Perhaps

I did not say a word more, but there was afterwards a buzzing in my ears as though I had said much.

Rosa pushed herself away from her leaning attitude by the window, as though pushing a boat from land; she gave a long and lovely look at my face. I suppose my voice had quivered and betrayed me.

"Well, jealousy may be a good thing in its way," she said gently; "perhaps it is a part of love, I don't know."

"Yes, no doubt it is."

"But I'm sure love can't live on jealousy, not in the long run."

"No."

A terrible joy welled up in me at her words: jealousy had united her to the master of this house, but she no longer had any love for him; this evening she had seen me in a new light, I had grown and become a man, the sight of my neck and throat had not displeased her, she had breathed down upon my hair.

I stammered something:

"I only want—you are so strange this evening. Heavens, I have never seen any one like you, you are the only one who—oh, but I think you are the most beautiful woman in the world. I do. And I only wanted to thank you."

"What has come over you?" she asked, smiling indulgently; but her face flushed red. "You can't be in love with me? No, nothing of the kind. You are so young. Well, what do you want?"

I had risen and extended my hand; I dared not go.

And when I heard her last question with its short, sharp sound, I sank back into my chair.

"Now be quiet!" I heard her say.

Now and then she looked at me and seemed to be thinking how she might calm me. Seeing she was afraid I tried to reassure her, I began to speak of my sister, saying that Rosa was so sisterly this evening, so good to sit and talk to. Some of this was only my invention; I had no big sister, though I had a little one. And Rosa did not seem quite to believe me either, she was older than I and certainly saw through me.

"I wanted to thank you for letting me come here," I said.

And as she was now reassured she smiled again and answered: "You are so far away from your friends." She came a step or two nearer, laid her head on one side and looked at me as she continued: "What has come over you? Yes, of course you may come here, come every day. Will you play a little now? No? Then perhaps you had better go."

"Oh no?"

"Yes, go home now and go to bed and calm down. Don't you think that's best?"

I seized her hand and kissed it violently and long.

"Don't make us unhappy!" I heard her say.

I found myself back in the chair, there was a step in the passage, Hartvigsen came in again.

"Aren't you going to play a little?" he asked.

"It is so late. No, thanks, it will soon be night."

"But we have another day to-morrow," said Rosa.

She was so gentle and sweet; both she and Hartvigsen saw me out and gave me their hands.

Hartvigsen, contrary to his custom, showed solicitude for his wife, saying:

"It's not warm summer weather now, Rosa. Put on a shawl."

"I'm not cold," she answered.

"Ah, perhaps you haven't any shawl," Hartvigsen went on. "But you could get one at the store and put it down to Hartwich, I should think!" At that he laughed in my direction.

As I walked home I turned and looked back many times. I found a slight consolation in imagining that perhaps Rosa felt rather lonely now I had gone.

I came to Sirilund. Mack was leaning out of his first-floor window in his nightshirt, talking to Man Ole down in the yard. So Mack had not gone to rest, far from it, he was fresh and glowing after his bath and had his wits about him.

"You may be sailing to-night," he was saying to Man Ole. "There's only one thing I want to say: when you come back from the trip you're to bring the schooner in on the far side of the lighthouse, into the outer bay. She's not going to Lofoten this winter; she's to be laid up till the spring for caulking."

XV

IT was after Seven Sleepers' Day.* The vessels had sailed south with the split fish and the drying rocks were left empty. The woods had already begun to lose their leaves.

At Sirilund things seemed to be quieter. Sven Watchman and Man Ole were gone and had taken a number of men with them; and Bramaputra, who was the cause of much gay and dangerous unrest among the men, had also taken her departure. Oh, but there were plenty of people left, all the quayside hands, the store clerks, the farm lads, the blacksmith, the baker, two millers, all the women, the Hookmaker, Jens Bairnsfather, and the parish pauper Fredrik Mensa, who lay abed and took nourishment and never obtained his release from this life.

No, Fredrik Mensa was not released. For a year now he had lain there becoming more and more like a child. He ate well and did not lose strength, but his mental faculties were dulled with age; if any one asked him a question he answered: "Bobo!" and at other times he would lie warring with his hands in the air and uttering meaningless sounds at them.

* June 2.

Every day he grew older, but every morning he awoke with the same good health which was proof against death. To the Hookmaker who now shared his little room he was a great trial.

An odd kind of friendship had grown up between the Hookmaker and Heavytop; they both missed Bramaputra and would have written to her in Bergen if they had not been afraid of Man Ole. Heavytop lurches backwards and forwards across the yard, unwieldy in his deformity; he carries wood from the shed for all the fires and his loads are immense. But his gait is slow and you can hear him coming as he pounds along on his two stumps. The high load of wood which he carries on his shoulders is really nothing to this giant, he can stand still with his load and spin long yarns with any one he meets; but when he gets going again he is careful as a child. At the kitchen door he deposits his load and takes it indoors in several journeys. Otherwise no doubt he would be afraid of the staircase giving way under him.

But what makes the friendship between Heavytop and the Hookmaker so odd is that it consists largely of practical jokes and raillery on the part of the Hookmaker. The cunning Hookmaker takes care to keep at a safe distance from the Cyclops and then plays the wiliest game with jeers and insulting names. And now he has hit upon a special sort of bird-calls for Heavytop's benefit. He watches the giant as he leaves the wood-shed and then starts

twittering in time to Heavytop's steps. As Heavytop stumps across the yard the Hookmaker follows behind him twittering away in time with all the force of his lungs. Heavytop walks on patiently for a while, then he changes step as well as he can and gets out of time; but the piercing bird-calls catch him up instantly and he has to keep step with them again. Relief only comes when he reaches the kitchen door. But then Heavytop looks back with eyes that promise deeds of blood. Oh, but by evening he is just as long-suffering as ever.

Hartvigsen is so full of queer whims; one day at the store he asked me if I could tell him the easiest way to Jerusalem.

A couple of customers were making their purchases and Gilbert the Lapp stood at the spirit-counter drinking a quartern or two. I thought to myself that Hartvigsen asked his question as a piece of boasting to show the store clerks and the customers that nothing was too much for him now, he could quite well make a journey to Jerusalem. I therefore did not answer him seriously, but only remarked: "Ha-ha, all the way to Jerusalem? That's a long journey!"

"Yes. But I suppose it's possible to get there?"

"Certainly it is."

"But you don't know the way?"

"Oh no."

"Can't you ask the Lightkeeper for me? You see, he and I have fallen out."

"If you really want to find out about it I'll ask the Lightkeeper."

"Yes, I want to find out."

The store clerks and Gilbert the Lapp and the customers stood still with wonder and Hartvigsen did not fail to see it. He put on a solemn air and said:

"It's a thing that's been in my mind since I was a child, that one day I would visit the far-famed land of the Jews."

Then Gilbert the Lapp wagged his head; Hartvigsen was now almighty and could do whatever he pleased. "It must be away beyond a whole lot of countries," he said, "and is there sea and daylight and people just the same as here? God bless my soul!"

And Gilbert the Lapp, who had a name for spreading all the news, made haste to empty his quartern and be ready to go.

At that moment the Baroness came into the doorway.

I watched her and the Lapp closely. Not the smallest change of her features betrayed her, she looked at him stiffly and without recognition; he was a stranger to her. Oh, she had her father's remarkable power of keeping others in check when she wished; she swept past like a queen, went behind the counter and entered the office.

Gilbert the Lapp gave his greeting: "Peace be with you!" and left the store.

I then told Hartvigsen what I had thought out on the spur of the moment: that he could travel across Europe to Constantinople and thence by ship to some place in Asia Minor. But it would require a knowledge of languages and take a very long time.

I did not quite know why, but I had no objection to Hartvigsen's going on such a long journey. I began to be pleased with the idea and said:

"I'll ask the Lightkeeper all about it."

"And ask him particularly the easiest way to do it," said Hartvigsen. "For we shall be two on the trip, a man and a lady."

I caught my breath; now I understood why I had been pleased at his going. Everything was changed now, if Rosa was going with him all my joy vanished.

"It is a dangerous journey," I said. "Now I think of it I don't like to ask the Lightkeeper. No, I can't do it."

Hartvigsen looked at me in surprise. The Baroness came out of the office, Hartvigsen stopped her and said that I declined to ask the Lightkeeper about the way to Jerusalem. She seemed a little embarrassed at this indiscretion of Hartvigsen's, but said with a smile:

"Oh yes. But why? That's very strange. Are you afraid Herr Hartwich and I might lose ourselves on the trip?"

And once more I caught my breath and joy sprang

up in me again. Oh, I had no shame, love led me astray and love is so hard.

"Yes," I stammered, "it is a dangerous journey. Oh, but it is not impossible, of course, far from it. Well, since you both wish it I will speak to the Lightkeeper. I will go and see him this very day. I will indeed."

The Baroness tried to give it a less serious turn and said with a little laugh:

"Oh, you needn't take it so earnestly as that."

But I took it earnestly, I had no shame, I went to the lighthouse determined to do all in my power to part Rosa's husband from us. How depraved I was! I never thought for a moment that Rosa would surely be grieved at Hartvigsen's travelling in company with another woman, nothing of the kind entered my head.

I did not go into the lighthouse. As I was about to climb the stairs to the living-room the Lightkeeper called me back. He was in his little woodshed chopping wood.

After some beating about the bush I came out with my business. The Lightkeeper listened to me, sniggered feebly and shook his head:

"He go to Jerusalem! Don't be made an April fool of, young man. It's only—do you understand French?"

"A little."

"It's only *blague*. And little Edvarda too!"

"I'm sure they're really thinking of it," I said.

"Ah. That upstart, he'll have no peace till he gets rid of his little bit of money. How will he manage for bread and butter at the end of it all? The way to Jerusalem? There are a thousand ways. Do these scapegraces want to be pilgrims, have they turned as religious as all that?" Suddenly the Lightkeeper exclaimed: "But, curse it all—Rosa, what does she say to it?"

I thought of this for the first time and could give no answer.

The Lightkeeper continued his chatter, stood still and thought a moment and started again. Finally he came to look upon the tour as not such an idiotic idea. "They're quite capable," he said; "little Edvarda is not a fool. And why shouldn't they have their little trip and see something more of the world than Sirilund Bay? They will set foot on other shores, where the sun is warmer and there are flying-fish in the sea. People ashore go about in silken clothes, the men wear red caps and smoke cigarettes. The more I think of it, the more I feel that they ought to go and get some of the home stuffiness blown off them, tell them that. Oh, you have no idea what Greece is like, young man!"

Lightkeeper Schöning forgot himself and showed his true feelings, which he was certainly reluctant to do. He grew excited at the memory of the foreign lands he had visited, his eyes were bright. "Think of it! are they really going there?" he said. "Well, they're quite right, it's a great idea. They will see

Greece. The way to Jerusalem, did you say? There's only one way to Jerusalem. They'll take a dried-fish boat from Bergen to some place in the Mediterranean, to Greece. From there it's not far to Jaffa. Then they will ride on Arab horses to Jerusalem. Tell them that. I'll write it all down if you like. She's a deuce of a one, that Edvarda!"

Next day Lightkeeper Schöning came to me with the route, in fact he had planned the whole tour. So interested was he, all fire and flame. "Let them take the mail boat to Bergen at once," he said; "the fish boats are just sailing for the Mediterranean; let them leave this gloomy place before winter; where they are going there are palms and men and women in silken clothes ashore. Can't you go with them and do the talking? Do you know English?"

"No."

"But French will do as well."

I gave the Lightkeeper's plan to Hartvigsen and said never a word about his needing an interpreter for the tour. On the contrary, I said that the Baroness could certainly manage the few words that would be required, and besides, Hartvigsen himself was a wonderfully quick learner, he could buy a conversation book in Bergen.

With this Hartvigsen agreed.

I went one night to Rosa's house and stroked the handle of the door and sat upon the doorstep where she last had sat. Dreams and images welled up within me, my feelings were distracted and I no

longer found peace. Day and night I went aimlessly to and fro. When I had performed this act with the door-handle and sat upon the doorstep I stole away again and made a long round to come home, ay, to come home to my room but not to sleep.

The Baroness asked me what was the matter, I was so dark under the eyes. I answered that it couldn't be anything and passed my hand under my eyes to get rid of the marks. Then she asked what I thought of the Jerusalem tour. "Why Jerusalem in particular?" I asked. She then explained why and she was profoundly unhappy, the light had gone out of her eyes as in the shades of evening:

"You see, Hartwich wants to go to Jerusalem, he has read about that city in the Bible. I too wish to go to Jerusalem. Here I find no peace in anything, possibly it will be better after I have been there. Holy ground, they say; well, perhaps it is holy ground, nobody can tell what effect it has. I have tried many ways here, I have even worshipped strange gods. It was the same with me in Finland, there too I had no peace. Nobody understood my behaviour when I was hostess and got up and left our guests. When I came back they asked if I was unwell, they were civil to me. But their civility was only a quality common to their whole class, and I was looking about for some personal quality that was out of the common. I went up to a man and asked: 'Are you a sportsman?' He did not understand me. A sportsman? No. But he had a

cousin who was a sportsman. 'Well, bring him along!' But what kind of a sportsman was he? A man who killed hares and birds, a brainless creature and nothing more. Bring me a blacksmith or a tramp with the right kind of blaze in his eyes and he is sportsman enough for me!"

I have put down so much of what the Baroness said because I associated with her daily and heard so much. But of her who was constantly in my thoughts I heard nothing. So it was. And at odd times it was a slight diversion to me to listen to the Baroness's talk and share in her fortunes, it made me forget my own for a while and that was a good thing. The Baroness often asked me questions about the journey and did not conceal the fact that she intended it as a pilgrimage. "I have so much to atone for," she said; "now I will go to Jerusalem. Do you think that will help me?"

"Perhaps. Oh yes, I'm sure it will. You will see so much, it will take you out of yourself. And we will all take great care of the little girls."

"Yes, you must all take great care of the little girls."

Her eyes were wide and wet and she had no peace till she had found the children and lifted them high, one after the other. But when she confessed that she had much to atone for it always made me think of her husband, who perhaps had killed himself on her account.

XVI

I WENT to Rosa and said:

"There is talk of a trip to Jerusalem; perhaps it may come off."

"Yes, I know," answered Rosa.

I stopped in surprise and looked at her as she answered so calmly that she knew of it.

"I only meant to say that perhaps the trip will really come off," I said again. "The Lightkeeper has planned the whole voyage, soon it will be too late to stop them."

Oh, my conscience had pricked me yesterday and it pricked me again to-day; I no longer rejoiced at getting Hartvigsen out of the way, but was full of concern about it.

"Why should the voyage be stopped?" asked Rosa. "It is not to be stopped at all."

"Oh, isn't it?" I said and held my peace.

"Benoni is so anxious to get away and I am quite willing. We should see so much, you know."

"Oh yes," I answered, completely befogged. So it turned out that Rosa was to go too. To make some small amends for my blunder I added: "Well, you will have to act as interpreter."

"I shall not be much of an interpreter," replied

Rosa. "I have learnt a little French and German, and I expect Edvarda has the same, but . . . Oh well, we haven't gone yet," she added.

No, they hadn't gone yet.

I met Hartvigsen and began to talk about the tour; he spoke all the time as though they were to be a party of three and there had never been a question of anything else.

"Then Rosa will be interpreter," I said.

"Yes," he replied, "she can do all that's needed in that line as far as that's concerned. You should hear her when a bottle drifts ashore with a message from the deep in various foreign languages; she reads it just as if it was one of the Ten Commandments."

"Yes. And no doubt Rosa is looking forward to the trip."

"I don't know. But this is just what I said to her: 'You'll have to come too,' said I; 'for I can't travel to foreign parts with another lady without you,' said I. And Mack thought the same."

"Of course."

"Well, well, we haven't gone yet, any of us," Hartvigsen added. "There's so much to be considered. In the winter there'll be the buying of fish cargoes for all our ships again and then there's the busy time at the store at Christmas. I shall have to keep an eye on it all now and not leave my partner in the lurch."

I could not get hold of what it was that had

brought about this reversal of plans, but I thought to myself that it was Rosa who had appealed to Mack, her fatherly friend at all times, and made representations.

Nor was the Baroness now so religious and depressed, she was more ready to laugh and spoke jestingly of the trip: "What does Benoni want in Jerusalem?" she said, calling Hartvigsen Benoni. "Let him stop here and be cock of the walk among the men of the place, ha-ha!"

But Lightkeeper Schöning was still all fire and flame. "Now mind you get them away," he said to me; "they've still time to catch the Mediterranean boats at Bergen!"

But one mail-boat after another went south and Hartvigsen and his party did not leave. So evidently nothing was to come of it all. I for my part took it for God's guidance that I had not got the travellers away and thereby been guilty of such grievous sin. Praise be to Him! And perhaps Rosa had guessed from the first that the journey would come to nothing, but for the sake of public decency she had wished to be mentioned as one of the party.

At last it dawned even on the Lightkeeper that he had worked out his whole route to no purpose. He met Hartvigsen at the store and his face went white as flour with impotent rage.

"Oh, you haven't gone to Jerusalem yet," he said. "By the way, I made a mistake in my plan; you have to go into the Baltic and from there to the Hebrides.

When you get to Dovre you must ask for a town called Peking. Then you will soon be there."

But Hartvigsen could see that this was all wrong; I had taught him a little geography in our lessons during the spring, and what he had learnt had stuck.

"But Peking's in China," he said; "what do we want there? And as for Dovre, it isn't on the way and it's in Norway."

"What am I thinking of, I meant Dover," said the Lightkeeper, quivering a little all over. "At Dover there are such a lot of hens, they stay there for a bit. He-he, riff-raff, swabs!"

The Lightkeeper disappeared through the door in full fury. So this man had been rejoicing on others' account that the world still lay open for *some* people and that they would see it in all its glory. But even in this he was disappointed!

I forced myself into some sort of calm and gave the last touches to my painting so as to have a pretext for visiting Rosa. When the picture was fairly dry I waited till one day Hartvigsen went past Sirilund on his way to the mill and then set out. Both Mack and the Baroness knew that I intended the picture for Rosa, so there was nothing remarkable in my taking it. And my choosing a moment when Hartvigsen was away was a weakness on my part for which I would have been prepared to suffer later. And in fact I had no great pleasure of my visit.

Contrary to all custom Rosa had locked the door inside. I knocked, but no one came and opened.

There is nobody at home, I thought; little Martha I had seen in company with the Baroness's children. I was therefore going back, when Rosa tapped at the window and opened the door.

"Gilbert the Lapp is prying about," she said; "did you see him?"

"No."

"Please come in. Oh, what a pretty picture you have painted! It's a pity Benoni is not at home to see it."

"It is for you," I said. "Be kind enough to accept it. Do you really like it a little?"

There was no spirit in me, I was confused and a prey to emotion. It was as though I were receiving alms, instead of offering a present.

"For me? No, thanks, that would not do," Rosa replied, shaking her head slowly. "It is annoying that Benoni is not at home, he would of course have paid you for the picture."

"It is not for sale."

For politeness' sake she held up the picture and looked at it, and her hands, which I had always admired, were so delicate as she did so. She spoke softly, recognized Mack's drawing-room, the silver angel, and said she positively longed to take a sip from the wineglass on the table, it looked so tempting with its wine.

"That is your wineglass," I said. "You put it down on the table."

She forgot herself and yielded a little in saying:

"Yes, I remember!" But a moment later she changed again, put down the picture and said: "Benoni will be back directly. He only went to the mill. Didn't you see him?"

Pause.

"Yes, I saw him," I answered.

So now I had made a clean breast of it. Rosa understood it all; she looked at me with friendly eyes, but shook her head once more.

"Was it so wrong?" I asked.

"Well, you mustn't be in love with me, you know," she replied.

"No," I said in my distress; "it's true I was better off before."

Rosa was so frank and natural, she went straight to the point. No, of course I had no business to be in love with her. But I was. How did she take it? I could find no pronounced displeasure in her, but on the contrary a great deal of tolerance. This tolerance was not to my taste, it made a child of me. To my delight she also showed uneasiness. Then I was not merely a child in her eyes, I thought.

"I'm not even going to ask you to sit down. I believe it will be best if we remain standing," she said—and sat down. A moment later she noticed what she had done, got up with a smile and said: "What am I thinking of!" Then she forced herself to be calm, pointed to a chair and invited me to be seated: "Why shouldn't we sit down? Now I am going to tell you something."

We both sat down.

She was profoundly serious. She did not speak in jerks and eddies, but gently and sensibly. And she sat there the while with her big red lips and her long narrow eyes under the heavy lids.

"You have heard that I was married before?" she asked.

"Yes."

"Yes. And now I am married again. My first husband is dead. I am not so young as you, and even if I were, the fact remains that I am married. Have you the impression that I am light-minded?"

"No, no."

"As a matter of fact I am so far from being light-minded that I am not yet entirely unmarried to Nikolai, who is dead. That seems to be the way with us who change, we are never quite released from the one we have left; you need not think we are. Every hour of the day we are reminded of the other; some of us may feel it more strongly, others more lightly, but none goes free. Perhaps we ought not to change! As regards you, it is so wrong, so wrong; oh, at the same time it is so beautiful, but it is such a terrible mistake for you. What do you expect it to lead to? I am seven years older than you and I am married. I am not one of the amorous sort, and if I were I would rather burn to death than show it. Perhaps you will remind me that you have seen me quite distracted with love? Ah, that love had nothing to do with the heart, but with the housekeeper's

place. I was a woman on the rocks; if instead of that I had been in clover you would have witnessed none of that distraction. And it gives you no pain to hear me speak thus cynically."

"It makes no difference one way or the other."

"It makes a great deal of difference, you will see. Even if I had been of your age and unmarried I should not have cared for you."

"Because I too was on the rocks? But so was your first husband, for whom you waited many years?" I exclaimed. "You are making yourself out worse than you are to help me over my difficulties!"

"Do you think so?" she said with a smile.

And here she revealed the true womanliness of her disposition: she seemed to have no objection to my interpreting her in this way; I was welcome to consider her self-sacrificing in love! All this occurred to me later; at the time I continued:

"And your distraction over Hartvigsen that day was genuine and honest enough, I believe: it was true jealousy of a rival."

Rosa gave a smile of embarrassment. "A little, perhaps," she said. But by degrees she became annoyed at my assertion and contradicted me again: "No, it is not so. But it doesn't matter; why should I sit here and explain myself?"

"No, no," I replied in humility; but I felt sure I was right, she was by no means so free from amorous feelings as she tried to make out.

"So you think I was jealous?" she said. "But

I am not at all one of the amorous ones, I tell you; I am just as simple and ordinary as you see me. My husband—my first husband, I mean—used to say I was a terrible bore. And I believe he was right. But what a lot of nonsense this is after all!" she suddenly broke off. "Your feelings run away with you so much and I can't do anything else to stop them."

"You cannot stop them," I said.

"Oh yes, I can. You know quite well that if there were others here it wouldn't be me you would be thinking of. But there are not so many here and you never go anywhere and meet others. I must say, by the way, that your case is altogether new to me. Those who have been fond of me before were never much upset by it, they ate and slept just as well; Nikolai was quite calm, Benoni is still calmer. So now I don't know how I am to treat you."

"Will you let me tell you how to treat me?"

"Yes."

"You must not be so motherly. You must not be so indulgent with me."

She laughed a little at this and replied:

"So that is how I am not to be. Well, but that's the only way. Otherwise you can't come here at all."

"Then rather that!" I said, youth that I was.

"No, look here, be sensible! You know very well that you are behaving like a child."

"And you know very well that I am no child," I interrupted with wounded pride.

Rosa looked at me and answered straight out:

"Yes, you are."

I simply sat and stared at her. There was I who had taken her for a person of refinement, and this was just raw, stupid woman's cackle. I was in my twenty-third year.

"Perhaps you are not altogether wrong in what you say," I said. "I think too that if there were others——"

"Absolutely!" she agreed, cutting me short.

"I shall try to conquer myself. Soon we shall have frost and the shooting season, I shall go about more, explore the district——"

"Oh yes, that is what you must do!" said Rosa. She got up, laid her hand on mine, stood still for a moment, and sat down again. "No, you see, there is no other way. I am your big cousin, your colossal cousin, he-he."

Another insult. I was not so small as to make her colossal. True, I was still growing; but this wretched belated growth must surely stop soon. I purposely changed my tone and asked:

"Well, has something happened to prevent the Jerusalem trip?"

Pause.

"Yes."

"Disagreement among the party?"

Pause.

"You are always so afraid to—you never ask questions—but I shall tell you something more, would you like me to? Perhaps you think I have been agitated to-day and possibly you interpret this in your own way. But the fact is, the Lapp has been here to-day—Gilbert; he always makes me so anxious. He knows so much."

She spoke of the Lapp with horror, no longer attempting to be calm, but showing every sign of anxiety. All my resentment vanished.

"He came stealing round the corner as soon as Benoni had gone and spoke to me and said: 'It's about old Malene!' Old Malene is my husband's mother—my former husband's mother. 'What about her?' I asked, though Benoni has been like a son to her and sent her all sorts of things. 'Why, this,' said Gilbert, 'she's so rich all of a sudden, she's had a hundred dollars sent her!' 'Who can she have got them from?' I asked. 'From nobody,' said Gilbert, 'she doesn't know; they came by post.' Then I felt as if my heart would burst out of my body and it was all I could do to ask: 'Wasn't there a letter with it?' 'No,' said Gilbert."

Pause.

"But it's a good thing the woman has got this money, isn't it?" I hazarded.

"Yes, but . . . but it can only have been sent by *one* hand."

"Oh no," I answered cheerfully, "it may have come from his estate. It may have been realized now."

"Do you think so?" asked Rosa, relieved. "But then they would have said so, there would have been a letter with it."

"Well, I must say I don't understand these things. But in any case you had a divorce from your first husband."

Rosa shook her head and said to herself:

"One is never divorced."

"Well, but whether he is alive or dead, you and he have nothing more to do with one another."

"That is a mistake. And besides—they told me he was dead. That he had—that he had met his death. Otherwise I should not have married again."

"I thought Hartvigsen and Mack had attended to all formalities; they spoke of a licence?"

"Yes, but that was not enough for me. So they told me he was dead."

"Well, then it must be true that he is dead," I said.

I was suddenly fired with dislike of this dead man that Rosa was so much taken up with. What concern was it of hers whether he was alive, did she still cling to him so closely? I no longer felt jealous of Hartvigsen, but of a dead man; oh, I wished my friend Hartvigsen the best of everything! And

what sort of a person was he, this other one? Sold his wife for a sum of money, spent it on drink and died!

"You called me a child," I said to Rosa, to put her to shame; "what do you think you are yourself? Dallying fondly with one who—with the memory of——"

As I stopped she looked up, waiting. Perhaps she wanted to make me say that about the sum of money and the sudden death. But as she appeared to cling to her Nikolai in spite of all, I returned her glance and did not proceed.

"Well?" she asked. "Dallying with the memory of——?"

"It's not quite the conduct of a grown-up person," I said.

Pause. She was in great perplexity.

"I beg your pardon," I then said.

She gave a sort of start, rose suddenly and laid her velvet hand against my cheek.

"God bless you!" she said. "You understand, don't you, that this is something more than a case of falling in love. You'll see, now I shall be calm," she said as she sat down again; "it was only that I got a scare; Gilbert is terrible."

"I'm quite ready to settle his hash," I said with a burst of zeal. "I know something about that Gilbert; at a word from me Mack will have him arrested."

"Indeed?" said Rosa. "Well, but that would not make things any better; Gilbert's warnings have always come true."

"That is—excuse me—a childish belief."

"Yes, they have come true. And to-day too he may have given a true warning. God knows. And, O my God, how is it all going to end! And at this time too!"

She rose to her feet again, stretched out her hands and smote them together. I saw her despair and her last words made me think—she had been married a few months, perhaps she was no longer in a state for strong emotions.

"Be calm now!" I said. "You have done no wrong."

I saw Hartvigsen coming along the road and gave her a hint. She stood in front of me.

"There is no need to enjoin silence," I said.

"Oh," she replied, "that does not matter. I will tell him myself. But I must thank you for understanding that I cannot help dallying with these memories."

I had understood nothing of the kind, this was woman's cackle again. On the contrary, Rosa's first husband must in any case be dead to her, even if he were alive.

"And you yourself must be good and go shooting and explore the neighbourhood," she said.

"Yes," I answered curtly.

Hartvigsen came in.

"Good news!" he said. "The vessels are in Bergen. When they come home again and lie in the harbour here full of goods for the store the insurance money will be mine."

"Good luck with all my heart!" I said, full of good will towards Hartvigsen.

Cheered by my words Hartvigsen added:

"So you see it isn't only my partner Mack who can speculate and make money."

XVII

SO I really no longer knew what to think or believe. Rosa had shown herself in a somewhat new light, her sentimental dalliance with her deceased husband, who was nothing but contemptible, rendered her unrecognizable in my eyes. Moreover she had been too frank and had talked without any restraint, whereas before she had been reserved and ladylike; after all I was a stranger to her. And had she not been a little too ready to assume that I loved her beyond all bounds? And she had called me child!

A week or two went by, I was waiting for autumn. One day the Baroness said to me:

"For seven years I have known nothing of my heart. I don't believe I have one any more."

And she said a good deal more in this strain, that her heart was dead, that she had been to church the Sunday before and would continue to go to church regularly and take the little girls with her. So she must have turned religious again, I thought.

I wrote a few words to Rosa, put the letter in my pocket and kept it there. At night when it was dark I went out with it.

Only then did I seriously think of the difficulty of

getting the letter delivered. As I stood at Rosa's door I took out the letter and persuaded myself it was the simplest thing in the world to stick it into a crack; but when I had successfully accomplished this I shook my head at myself and put the letter in my pocket again.

I behaved in just as silly a way the next evening. I had written a fresh letter and burnt the old one. What did I write? Foolishness: I am going out shooting, I love you! Oh, I was a child. I made my letters shorter and shorter; the third evening I wrote: Rosa! That seemed quite long enough. I sealed the letter, hid it in my breast and slept with it there.

In the morning there was an early knock at my door, before I was up. It was the Baroness. She stood in the doorway, seeing and hearing nothing, with hat and cloak on. No doubt she had already taken a walk in the open air.

"Didn't you tell me you had a friend?" she asked.

"Yes. Please excuse my being still—I will get up at once."

"That's all right. How old is he?

"My friend? Two or three years older than I."

"Write for him. What is his name?"

"Friar Vendt."

"Write for him."

I saw to my terror that my letter to Rosa lay on the floor; I tried to get the Baroness out of the room again and promised to write for Friar Vendt.

"Immediately," I said. "As soon as I am up."

"And can't you take your gun on your shoulder and go and meet him?" she asked.

"Yes. That will be first-rate."

Oh, it would not be first-rate; just now I was more reluctant than ever to leave this place to which I was firmly attached. In a month perhaps I should be better able to do it.

The Baroness asked:

"Is he a student?"

"Friar Vendt is a student."

"Then he can be tutor to Martha. Benoni wants to go in for a tutor too," she said, curling her lips slightly.

A shudder went through me: Friar Vendt in the same house as Rosa! He was capable of—he was a wild lad, a scapegrace, the devil himself.

Might I venture to oppose the Baroness a little? The letter lay there on the floor with the address up; but she seemed not to see or hear anything and that made me rather bolder.

"Friar Vendt will hardly do for a tutor," I said. "Permit me when I have got up——"

"Then I shall be gone; I am going away. Write your letter now; Jens Bairnsfather is below and will take it; he is to walk day and night. Then you can follow after."

"Yes," I said.

"When you meet your friend you are to bring

him here. Then we can see. He can stay with you for a while."

"Thank you," I said.

Her eyes seemed to grow more conscious, as though recalled from far away; she looked about the room.

"There's Alina's drawing!" she said, looking at the wall with a smile. Me she never looked at. Finally she asked: "Then you will go to-day?"

"Yes, at once," I answered.

"Good-bye for the present. Excuse me."

She went out.

I jumped up and burned the letter, dressed and went out. It was eight o'clock; the Baroness had already left the house. I meant to take a short walk—I wanted to leave a message somewhere that I was going far away into the woods to the north—when Jens Bairnsfather overtook me and asked for the letter he was to carry. Oh, that man with the stoop and the long legs, there was no avoiding him; he was on his mistress's business. I went back with him and wrote the letter. I had thought of making it brief and chilly; but why should I put on a peevish air? We were all in the hands of fate; Jens Bairnsfather, that slave of the Baroness, would be sure to bring Friar Vendt dead or alive. He was no more likely to take No for an answer than when he went about begging people for meat-bones.

I went to Rosa and said:

"It's only that I'm going away. So I have come to tell you straight out."

"When?" she asked. "Are you going shooting?"

"Yes. I'm going to fetch a tutor for Martha. He's to live here with you, under the same roof."

"I don't understand—is he to come here?"

"I'm going to meet him to make sure he'll come. Aren't you glad?"

Rosa smiled at my mysterious talk. I felt my face drop into a tortured look.

"I don't understand," she repeated. "Did Benoni say so?"

"The Baroness said so. A tutor for Martha, you see. Here, with you, every day with you."

"Oh, now I remember Benoni was talking about a tutor," said Rosa to show she was a party to it. "You mustn't worry about that; what makes you so strange?"

"Well, now you'll just see, you'll get fond of this tutor. He's older than I and looks different. So you'll get fond of him."

Then Rosa laughed aloud and hurt me deeply by her frivolity.

"What are you laughing at?" I asked.

She answered seriously:

"Never! Neither of him nor any one else."

When I had opened the door I stepped back and took her hand in a sharp and hurried grasp.

"Good-bye, good-bye. Good sport!" she said.

"No, I wanted to thank you," I replied.

And I went out.

Rosa came out with me and was no doubt afraid of having led me into a false hope.

"Why did you thank me?" she asked.

"Because you didn't ask his name, how old he is or what he looks like."

She shook her head:

"I don't care to know that. I don't care about any one."

For the second time she meant to make it plain to me!

Then I set out northward through the woods, wearing the same rig I had had on in the spring when I came to Sirilund; I was as it were my old self again and had my gun with me.

The aspens are shedding their scorched autumnal leaves, which shiver down the trees with a gentle rustling all through the wood. Not a bird. The path goes over ridge after ridge; in front and to the right I hear a murmur, the sea. Not a human being, not a thing, only this long-drawn simmering in the air. The forest through which I am walking is untouched, it is born of itself, lives its time and then is born anew; there are pine and aspen and mountain ash, the juniper is everywhere. The great firs are rugged, the big stones and rocks lie secure in their beds, overgrown with moss. After walking for some hours without seeing sign of life I took to rolling over stones of a manageable size to see if there were worms or other crawling things

underneath them. I grew calmer by degrees and was able to think over many things.

What exactly am I doing here? I thought. My mistress the Baroness wants to see my friend to find out whether he is of Glahn's sort or not, she is in league with Hartvigsen over this, it is all well thought out. But how this same Baroness is everlastingly making trouble for herself! She never associates with other women; with her father she only exchanges the most indispensable words. At table Mack thanks her when now and then she is attentive enough to pass him the bread; then he may ask a question or two about the little girls, otherwise he is silent and courteous. He never takes his daughter into his room and asks her: What makes you look so dejected, my child? Some mystery must brood over the house of Sirilund. And what has parted the two friends, Rosa and the Baroness? They never speak to one another now, though they are not enemies; they simply do not need one another. That must be it.

When I had walked and walked till evening I came to a Lapp dug-out where Jens Bairnsfather had left food for me as arranged. I lit a fire on the hearth, roasted my boiled meat on the embers and drank water to it from the brook outside. Then I threw plenty of dry sticks on the fire, gathered branches for a bed and lay down for a few hours.

I awoke in the dark, felt cold, laid more wood on

the hearth and fell asleep again at last. I awoke again in the dark, but felt I had had all the sleep I wanted, cooked myself another meal and went outside to wait awhile. Then the dawn came faintly behind me in the east, the darkness parted and I set out again on my journey to the north.

Thus I went on for two days and Friar Vendt did not appear, and I slept in abandoned dug-outs. Then I went on another day and had gone many miles altogether; now and then I saw the sea from the heights, and I began to put up birds. I was coming into strange country. Then Friar Vendt appeared. He had Jens Bairnsfather with him.

Then all was forgotten, we two comrades blessed each other for the happy meeting. We rested an hour and talked of every imaginable thing, the hour flew by and we talked on as we walked. Friar Vendt was still the same lad as ever, he still wore gloves, though he was not afraid of taking them off and doing some work with his hands. He had a handsome beard and eyes with large pupils; his walk was so springy and light that he tired us both out, but at every step he took his trousers opened at the back; he was so ragged and so miserably poor, he had no waistcoat. Friar Vendt had none of this world's goods, any more than I.

But his hands were uncommonly beautiful, and they would touch Rosa's hands!

After a while our words became fewer, as we had to go in single file on the path and the leader

had to turn his head every time he had anything to say. Then the hunter's spirit awoke in Friar Vendt, his senses were so keen, in these woods where I had seen nothing he went off for a quarter or half an hour and shot enough ptarmigan for a meal. Later on he told me of a girl he had at home, her name was Blis and she was never out of his thoughts. When I asked if he would be tutor in a family like myself he said No. He struck up a great singing laugh and said: "Are you mad? We're going on a ramble, you and I!" And when I saw the great gentleness and kindliness with which he moved about the woods, how every tree and every bush and the stones and the rocks seemed more to him than simply trees and stones, I understood quite well that his place was not within doors. Sometimes he came upon a stone that he liked better than the others, not only to sit on, but to have near him; he looked at them and felt an affection for them. I had never looked upon stones in that way, I was a stranger to them and an indoors creature; I was no sportsman either.

I will show him a stone and hear what he thinks of it! I said to myself.

When we had walked for two days till late at night we came to the neighbourhood of Sirilund. Here I made Jens Bairnsfather leave us and go in advance; Friar Vendt went with me to the undermiller's wife and got his clothes mended. Then I took him straight up the hill to the little stone image in the osier thicket.

We crept up to the pond, there was the same peace and stillness; Friar Vendt sat down. His nostrils went in and out, he seemed to scent the presence of others besides ourselves.

"Are we not alone?" he asked.

"We must be. Who else should be here? I'm looking for a spider that was spinning here one day, but that is gone too."

"How still it is!" said Friar Vendt. "Why, perhaps it's a good thing that spider's gone, it might make too much noise."

I noticed how fine and white his wrists were and said: "Take off your glove."

He took off both gloves and laughed as he did so.

Then I got him across the pond, pointed to the little stone man and said:

"Now here's a stone, what do you think of that?"

Friar Vendt quite calmly took the stone man in both hands, lifted it from its place and looked at it all round. But I looked away.

"A little idol," he said. "I have seen them before, little Lapp idols. Shall we take it with us?"

"No," I said.

He put the god back in its place, smiled at its deformity, shook his head.

"What does it feel like to take hold of?" I asked; "didn't it hurt your hands?"

"No. Why should it hurt my hands?" he said, putting his gloves on again. "It had a greasy feel, by the way."

OHIO UNIVERSITY
LIBRARY

We went on. Jens Bairnsfather now had a couple of hours' start of us, he would have arrived long ago. Sirilund lay before us with all its great buildings; farther off could be seen Hartvigsen's home and the quays.

"This looks a big place," said Friar Vendt.

He walked buoyantly and unconcernedly as though he wore handsome clothes instead of rags; he was in the best of humours, since he had already fed twice that day. "That is more than I am used to!" he said with a little laugh. A female figure was coming slowly towards us; she was tall and slim, and Friar Vendt twice called out *"Ai!"* to her before he knew it was the Baroness. "It's the Baroness," I said, "she's coming to meet us."

At Friar Vendt's cry she stopped, looked in our direction and waited.

"Are you here?" she said when we stood before her. But she must have said this to cover her confusion; her smile was embarrassed when I made the introduction.

Friar Vendt followed my example and held his cap in his hand.

"I'm afraid I called out *Ai, ai,"* he said frankly with a smile. "I didn't know who it was, I only saw a tall—a slender——"

Oh, Friar Vendt said this so charmingly as he put on his cap. And the Baroness shrank a little and shortened her neck as he looked at her.

"As a matter of fact I have to go a little farther on," she said with a nod.

But no doubt she said this to show she had not come on purpose to meet us.

So we parted and went our ways. And Friar Vendt did not mind in the least. For that matter he thought the Baroness old and queer.

XVIII

A COUPLE of days have gone by. Friar Vendt is gay and has been in great request, the Baroness blossoms out in his company, she even grows young again and talks in her velvety voice.

At table they behave equally badly, like two servants, putting both elbows on the table. They swallow in a way that is horrible to listen to, plaster their bread with butter just where they have bitten it and then put down the buttery knife on the tablecloth instead of on their plate. I am sure the Baroness does it from pure untidiness and not simply for the sake of being different from the rest of us. Mack himself is above taking notice of such things and pretends not to see.

To-day Friar Vendt went of his own accord down to the quays without me; there the Baroness met him and strolled along the road with him for a long time. And I strolled with the little girls. Friar Vendt has got some red spots on his hands, otherwise he is happy and walks with head erect; in the evening he sings in my room from sheer contentment.

I purposely went a long way with the children; it

is best to get far away, I thought. Two hours later we came back and the Baroness and Friar Vendt were nowhere to be seen. So the children and I went in. I went round by the drawing-room, and as no one was there I went up to my own room.

Then I saw from my window the Baroness and Friar Vendt coming out of Hartvigsen's house and Rosa standing on the doorstep. Friar Vendt was carrying the Baroness's shawl. Oh, the air had turned cold, I saw her arrange the shawl herself over his shoulders so that it hung well down in front and behind; but I dare say she pretended that this was to prevent creasing.

They separated at the entrance to Sirilund, the Baroness came up the steps, but Friar Vendt turned into the store with the shawl on.

When an hour had passed I went down to the store and found Friar Vendt at the spirit-counter. He was pretty drunk and had no idea of moderation, but still he could walk straight and stand as firm as a tower. When I tried to rescue the Baroness's shawl which he was soiling, he protested: "Leave it alone, it's warm." He behaved like a regular wag and talked jovially and blasphemously with both the store clerks. Now as in old days he was in revolt against God.

At last I got him up to my room, where he fell asleep for an hour or so. On awaking he drank my water-jug dry and went to sleep for another hour. Then he was as fit as ever, a youth in soul and body,

perfectly gentle and full of spirits. Oh, my mad comrade Friar Vendt!

The eruption on his hands had got worse, his fingers had swollen up and there were blisters here and there. "Hell to this!" he growled. And then he would sit and look at his hands in surprise.

Then we settled down for a chat. But all the time my thoughts were absent and I only answered when I could not help it. All at once I gave Friar Vendt my waistcoat; it was not quite big enough, but better than nothing. Then we chatted again and the time went by.

"Rosa, what sort of a one is she?" he asked.

"I don't know," I replied. "Rosa? I'm sure she's the best of women. Why do you ask?"

"And the Baroness, what sort of a one is she?" he asked again. "A singular lady."

"I'm sure the Baroness is another excellent person," I replied again; "she is a widow, two nice children. A singular lady? Oh, I don't know. Her nerves are in such a state, she makes trouble wherever she goes, she interferes in everything here and at the Hartvigsens'; even I am wilder in my talk since she came. She is still mourning for a young lieutenant of her girlish days."

"She's making asses of you all," said Friar Vendt. "Why do you let this old thing order you about? That's what I said to her."

"To her?"

"Just so. And what did she answer? 'That's

just what a doctor we once had here used to say,' she answered. A sensible man that."

"Wasn't she offended, furious?"

"I don't know," replied Friar Vendt. "She talked me to rags, made me quite stupid. 'I believe in madness in virtue of its necessity,' she said; 'nay, in virtue of its essential reason as balance,' she said. 'I'm off to the store to get a drink,' I replied."

And Friar Vendt laughed with assurance at what he had said.

I asked:

"Did you see little Martha? Are you going to be her tutor?"

"What should I teach her?" he retorted. "You know what I can do. As far as that goes, I'm not going to be a tutor at all, I'm going back where I came from. No, I shan't stay here long."

"No, no," I said.

I glanced at his hands and they looked really sore, the fingers were becoming more and more like sausages; he could no longer get his gloves on. Then it occurred to me to give Friar Vendt some shirts. When he thanked me for them I shed tears and asked his forgiveness for something.

Friar Vendt laughed in surprise and asked:

"What are you asking my forgiveness for?"

I did not answer his question but simply replied: "Love is hard!"

Then he looked at me with staring eyes and asked:

"You don't mean to say you're in love with that old—that—what shall I call her?"

"No, with Rosa," I answered.

Days and nights went by, Friar Vendt was ill at ease among us and wanted to go out and shoot something, but he could not do this on account of his sore hands. He had had an encounter with the Baroness, they did not get on at all; Friar Vendt went so far as to break off a good switch and show her how he was going to flog Gilbert the Lapp. This was in the wood by the mill. I held my breath as I listened to his words:

"That crazy female, that woman comes and—she has noticed the eruption on my hands at last and a light seems to strike her. She asks: 'You don't mean to say you've—have you been at the god?' 'The god?' I say. 'The stone god,' she answers. 'Yes,' I say, 'I've been there.' 'Unhappy man!' she cries. We blither about this for a while: I had been messing with the god, Gilbert the Lapp's god; it was holy and now it had avenged itself on me! I laugh and joke about it all the time and make her more or less raving mad, then I break off a sizeable withy and start pulling the twigs off. I demand the Lapp, his name is Gilbert, a regular reptile, of course; out with him! She doesn't listen to me, but calls me Unhappy man and Poor fellow and is sorry for me. 'The stone god!' she says, 'oh, now I see it is true he can avenge himself! It is not a stone,' she says, 'what kind of stone could it be? You must know

that it is dripping with holiness which generation after generation of Lapps have *prayed* into it!' she says. Then my time had come, I tried my whip, it whistled finely in the air though it hurt my fingers cruelly, but I didn't notice that for rage. 'Out with the Lapp!' I said. 'The Lapp?' she asked; 'he can't help you.' 'Then I'll go and find him myself,' I said. She answered: 'Are you mad, what are you going to do?' And she ran after me and held me fast. The woman is strong, remarkably strong, and I am so disabled about the hands. 'Out with the Lapp or I'll find him myself and whip him all the way down to your house,' I said. 'The Lapp? What do you want with the Lapp?' she asked, panting at me like an animal. I flourish my whip and make it sing: 'By God in Heaven!' is all I say. 'Tell me what you want with the Lapp!' she screams. I explain that I am going to give Gilbert a hiding; oh, but I'll lay him on a soft bed of moss when I've done with him! The scoundrel has smeared his idol with poison to catch any one who touches it. I feel that I'll go so far as to spread my coat over him when I've done, for he won't move in a hurry. While I was talking the Baroness's expression changed, she caught her breath and looked positively foolish. 'Poison?' she said, 'has he smeared it with poison?' 'Yes, he has,' I answered, 'he's smeared it with resin and I'm certain there's pepper-crop and mercury in the resin.' 'I'll send for the Lapp,' she said. So we walked together out of the wood and

home. In spite of myself I felt some pity for her wretched brain, she had evidently believed in all the Lapp's humbug. She gave Jens Bairnsfather the job of hunting for Gilbert the Lapp day and night till he found him and brought him along. 'I beg your pardon for being so violent,' I said to the Baroness. 'Yes, you're a terrible man,' she said. Then there was a pause between us. 'Are you really going to flog the Lapp?' she asked. 'Yes, I am!' I answered."

I looked at Friar Vendt's hands again and saw that one or two of the blisters had burst and that they were bleeding. As I knew he had no money I gave him two dollars which I had received that morning as an advance from Mack, and again I shed tears of anxiety and sorrow. I was thinking all the time: love is hard indeed! I am sinking deeper and deeper into iniquity and there is no more pride and no more honesty in me. If I do evil to any one I do not make a clean breast of it, but let one day after another go by. God have mercy on me!

Nevertheless I might have seized this good opportunity to say more to Friar Vendt, but that he was full of his scene with the Baroness and perhaps suspected that my tears were for her.

"Shut up," he said, "she'd be all the better for a dressing-down herself."

At dinner the Baroness sat properly at table and behaved decently, as she had not done for a long time. I thought to myself: she wants to put a dis-

tance between herself and Friar Vendt; but perhaps it is wasted, he doesn't notice it and follow suit, he goes on just as before. But he had his youthful carelessness and laughter, even Mack listened to him with pleasure and smiled at his vivacity. Mack made him a present of some of his own clothes, and Friar Vendt thanked him cordially and felt at his ease.

In the evening the Baroness brought him some lead lotion for his hands.

This started him at once.

"But where's the Lapp?" he said, springing to his feet.

"The Lapp?" repeated the Baroness. "He hasn't come."

She was afraid of hearing more about the Lapp and I said a few words to quiet Friar Vendt again.

"He is so uncontrollable, your friend," the Baroness said to me with a smile.

"What's wrong with me?" asked Friar Vendt mischievously. "Look here, how fine I am in your father's clothes! There's nothing wrong with me."

He got up and strolled out of the room. And in fact these strange clothes made quite another man of him; but as he had no trace of vanity he did not trouble to wear them otherwise than the old rags he was used to.

"Let me bandage your hands to-night," the Baroness called after him as he went out. She was all kindness.

There was to be another conflict between the two that night.

Friar Vendt came into my room about eleven when all the house was quiet and began to tell me about it. He had bandages on his hands, but the rags had been pulled loose and he asked me to bind them properly.

"Was the Baroness as clumsy as this?" I asked.

Friar Vendt hummed as though pleased with himself, but I saw quite well that his thoughts were far away.

"Oh, it's always tricks and tomfoolery and nothing else with these fine folks!" he said. "I went in to that old—that——"

"To the Baroness?" I asked. "Went into her room?"

"What was I to do? she was nowhere else to be found," he replied. "What did it matter? 'Go down to the drawing-room,' she said. 'What do I want there?' said I. Then she bandaged me. 'Good night,' she said. 'Why?' said I. Oh, it's all just nonsense and tomfoolery with a lady like that!"

Pause. I soaked the rags in lead lotion and bandaged him; meanwhile Friar Vendt went on abusing the Baroness. I was sure he had made an attempt on her and been rebuffed, and I welcomed her victory; oh, I knew full well that she was not the low creature Friar Vendt made out!

When he had talked and talked a long time I asked

him to go. But now he was not sleepy and would not go to bed.

"To-morrow I'll rile her by buttoning my waistcoat crooked," he said. "I'll have a spare buttonhole on top and a spare button below. Yes. Then she'll guess I'm impossible. Perhaps you don't believe she's capable of anything? Of course she is."

"Not at all," I said.

"Of course she is. When she's talked off all her tomfoolery. I sat with her a long time. 'You mustn't sit down,' she said. So I sat a little tighter. 'But you must only stay a moment,' she said. 'Why?' said I. Then she got hold of the bell-rope, but she wasn't going to ring. Then she got fierce and walked to the door, but she didn't open it. The same all the time, you see, nothing but silliness."

"And then?" I asked.

"Then!" he mimicked. "What could I do with these rags on? But it was just waywardness with her, nothing else."

"Are you aware that you must beg her pardon to-morrow?" I said hotly. "One day you flourish a whip at her, another day—what? What kind of a great man do you think yourself here, and do you imagine you're dealing with a fisher lass?"

"No, no," replied Friar Vendt more subdued. "Beg her pardon, did you say? All right."

"The first thing to-morrow."

"To-night! instantly!" said Friar Vendt all of a sudden. "The more I think of it the more I want

to do it to-night. You're right, it was wrong of me, I don't know how to deal with these people, where should I have learnt it? When I kissed her she bit her lip till it bled, she gave me a fright, she stood there sputtering blood at me, it looked as if her mouth was flowering. And now I'll go and make my excuses. Don't you think I ought to do it at once?"

"No," I said.

XIX

I HAVE purposely kept away from Rosa's house for a long time; nay, I have sought to chasten myself in many ways. It is no more than I have deserved. I have promised myself to return to the paths of duty and rectitude and never again to steal into Rosa's door with covert thoughts.

I met Hartvigsen, he asked me to go home with him—I thanked him and declined.

"I was thinking that you might get your friend to be tutor in my house," he said.

"Haven't you asked him yourself?"

"Yes. He doesn't want to."

"What does your wife say to it?" I asked.

"My wife?" repeated Hartvigsen and seemed to turn this expression over in his mind. And in fact from that moment he dropped saying Rosa and always said my wife, my wife—"My wife she don't think of anything, she's so scared of one thing and another just now," he said. "So now it's me that has to see to everything. No, my wife hasn't said a word about it."

"I'll speak to Friar Vendt," I said.

But Friar Vendt was not to be moved. He honestly disliked the place and wanted to get back

to his own haunts. I was both glad and sorry at his decision. He stuck to it that I must go with him when he left, and the thought of this tormented me night and day. But I thanked God that his hands were nearly well again.

Now Friar Vendt had begged the Baroness's pardon for his behaviour; but after that he felt uncomfortable here because he had put himself so disgracefully in the wrong and lost all his assurance. He looked forward to getting his hands in order by the time he met Gilbert the Lapp. But Gilbert the Lapp was nowhere to be found, Jens Bairnsfather had returned long ago from his bootless errand. Oh, I think the Baroness must have had a hand in this: she never sent Jens Bairnsfather to find the Lapp, but to warn him. What she thought was that if the Lapp was found and brought to book he would disclose all and involve her in the affair. Poor misguided Baroness Edvarda!

One day she asked me how long Friar Vendt was to stay. "I don't know," I answered: "he won't go away without me." The next day she was still more uneasy and wished that Friar Vendt would leave. "He is so uncontrollable," she said, and though his conduct gave her good grounds for ordering him to go, she made no allusion to this. A well-bred lady she was. On the other hand she was in constant fear lest Gilbert the Lapp might turn up one day and Friar Vendt get hold of him. "Your

friend has no moderation," she said; "he'll be apt to do something dreadful!" "I will speak to Friar Vendt," I said.

So I spoke to Friar Vendt. He listened to me with great resentment and was disappointed at having to give up the Lapp. He explained how he would have done it: I was to carry the grindstone and Friar Vendt would grind the Lapp's hands on it well, till the skin was tender and thin, then these hands were to be employed on the stone god for half an hour or so, and the same stone god would be thoroughly stroked and patted. At that point I might take myself off and need not witness any more. But Friar Vendt promised solemnly to lay his coat over the Lapp when he left him in the osier thicket.

"The Baroness is unwilling that you should touch the Lapp," was my answer to all this.

Then Friar Vendt went to the wood one day and took an axe with him. I followed him after a while and heard him hacking at the osiers. He had smashed the wretched stone man and swept the pieces into the pond, now he was clearing the osier thicket and letting the light into the sacred grove. A good riddance!

"If you'll come too we'll leave here to-morrow," said Friar Vendt on the way back.

"I can't," I replied.

"Then I'll go alone," he said.

Friar Vendt made no secret of his decision; the

Baroness looked relieved and sat with us in the evening, as amiable as could be. And oh, her feminine mutability! Now that Friar Vendt was to leave us he must not be allowed to carry away the impression that she was a cold and weary woman, oh, no! I thought to myself: then she must be feeling troubled by the strange thrill of Friar Vendt's eyes!

She sat with her arms raised above her like a gateway. Her dress was so tight that it clung closely to her hips. *"Ai!"* said Friar Vendt. The Baroness spoke of Finland as her birthplace: she had given birth to so many daughters there, that was why she called it her birthplace. "If I loved a man I would kill him with tenderness!" she said. *"Ai!"* said Friar Vendt.

Oh, but I am sure the Baroness said most of this from recklessness, from delight at her rescue: Friar Vendt had smashed the idol and wiped out every trace of it, had even cut down the whole grove; now on the top of that he was going away and she would never see him again. He had brought so much uncertainty with him—thank God he was going!

She poured out wine for us and brought an excuse from her father, who was too busy to sit with us. For Friar Vendt she filled a long pipe and gave it him, and for me she had cakes, as I do not use tobacco.

"Now you are to listen," said the Baroness, taking a paper out of her pocket. "This is a Finnish

poem, I have translated it after a fashion. It is so strange."

Indeed it was strange! And the Baroness read it in her velvet voice and pronounced each word slowly; now and then it was as though she sang:

"All the things that are in the world—

Support me, hold me up, support me!

Spring is so soft, it lies so softly at night and decides nothing, but simply leads me into embarrassment. Oh, Spring does not deliver a firm and obvious attack, it simply comes and is with me till I am vanquished.

Such is Spring.

"Oh, all the things that are in the world!

If I could delight you with my tears, you who wander far away! You who made me happy for two moments of my youth! You who ran through your life's fortune in three great waves of emotion! But tears are gone from me. Do you remember when I came in and kissed you and was going again? Then you threw your head round and stared at me, to see how passionately I loved you.

Such a one am I.

"An axe is a kindly thing and kind in itself, there is no poison in it. An axe is no suicide's weapon, it does not rip any one up, it only kisses. A red mouth the axe leaves where it kisses, two red lips open where it has kissed.

Such is the axe.

And here I have a heart for it.

"Oh, but Life is in this wise:

It is an eternal separation from you. Such is Life. And none can live unless his head be bright within with stupidity so that he understands nothing but riddles. O, come now to Spring, my great Beloved, and bring your axe with you! I take my stand beneath the stars with my tongue ready to lick the axe. Such am I.

Such is Life."

As the Baroness read on she turned deep red in the face, several words she sang. She handed the paper to Friar Vendt. He said: "Nothing but tricks and tomfoolery!" The paper came round to me.

The Baroness was ill at ease, Friar Vendt's words put her out of countenance as though she had done something wrong in reading this, perhaps she felt foolish for having positively sung some of the words. "Say thank you for my reading," she said to recover herself. And we both thanked her. "Perhaps it ought to be recited to music?" I said. "That's it," Friar Vendt instantly rejoined; "that would make it still worse. Then I'd make my girl Blis sing it, ha-ha-ha."

But as it was Friar Vendt who was going away the Baroness felt it her duty before all else to keep him amused, she filled his glass and drank with him.

"The Lightkeeper told me once about the countries where the vine grows," she said. "If only our pilgrimage had come off we should have seen them."

Friar Vendt answered:

"But it's good here too, the pine woods, the mountains, the northern lights. I have a cave where I live, it's fine!" When Friar Vendt said this the wine must have filled him with memories, he looked so warm and handsome and breathed hard with the strength of his feelings.

"Yes, but here we have snow in winter, that is horrid. And all the lakes and rivers freeze, ugh! In other parts they have sunshine and rain, sunshine and rain, says the Lightkeeper. And people go about in thin clothes, the girls wear a shift and a skirt."

"Ai!" said Friar Vendt.

Shortly after he emptied his glass, said thanks and wandered out of the room. It was evening, the lights in the store were being put out; the farthest window, where the spirit counter was, shone for a little while yet, then that too was dark.

Friar Vendt came up to my room; he had been to the store and had more to drink, so he was pretty cheerful.

"You shouldn't have done that," I said.

"Shut up!" he answered. "You're like a girl, you put up with everything and you get nothing for it but a face full of pimples. And you rub a little ointment on your pimples and get better, and then you get more pimples and do the same again. That's the kind of softy you are."

"Go away to bed if you're leaving to-morrow," I said.

Friar Vendt answered:

"I'm not leaving. But now I think of it, the Baroness is quite right when she says perhaps you're not a boy. You play the piano like any other girl, she says."

These words hurt me sorely. I had taken great pains to practise my playing, and now even this was not counted to my advantage but on the contrary it was cast in my teeth. Well, well, then perhaps I was just a little well-behaved youth with parlour talents, fashioned and turned out thus by Providence. And Friar Vendt was a man.

"Aren't you going to-morrow?" I asked.

"No. Nor the next day either. No, you see, I'm waiting for the Lapp. Besides, she told me just now on the stairs that I had been so handsome this evening, that I had had such a thrill in my eyes, she said, ha-ha-ha."

"Who said that?"

"Who? The Baroness."

"What did you say then?"

"What did I say? *Ai!* I said. But ask what I did! Look here, how long have I been up here with you?"

"A quarter of an hour," I answered. "A quarter of an hour too long."

"Now I'm going," he said.

Oh, he evidently had something on hand, since he

asked the time. I heard him move softly along the passage. I did not go to bed just yet; on the contrary, I put on a few more clothes and stood ready to go out when Friar Vendt came back.

"Isn't it just what I say—all tomfoolery with the fine folks!" he burst out indignantly. "Shut up, I tell you, I had good reason to do what I did. But it's all tomfoolery and nothing else. Hell to it! Are you going out?"

"Yes."

"Yes, you *walk* it off, that's your remedy. And then you put some ointment on your pimples. And when you get more pimples——"

I pulled my door wide open with a jerk. Friar Vendt looked at me, and though he might have laughed in my face and sat down in a chair, he turned serious all at once and said:

"Very well, you're right, I'll go to bed. But you must admit—you see, the door was locked."

"If she promised to leave it open it was only to get rid of you," I said. "You're like a beast."

Friar Vendt thought this over.

"Do you mean that?" he said. "But I was allowed to kiss her. I should think I was! Was that to get rid of me too?"

"Yes."

"I dare say it was. I don't understand that kind of folks. But now I'm going to bed."

I took the road to the quays. And I looked down at the lighted windows of Hartvigsen's house, but

walked past. On my way back I made a halt and looked at the stars just where the road turned off to Hartvigsen's. But I did not set my foot on his road, I simply stood and looked at the stars.

XX

FRIAR VENDT is gone.

I was beginning to think that after all he would be tutor at the Hartvigsens'; but all the time, day after day, he refused to be a tutor. He sneered at my position and asked why I had come to these parts at all. "To meet my fate," I answered. The Baroness shook her head over my friend's staying on, she actually complained to me.

"He has many good qualities," I said.

"No. Oh, well, perhaps he has," she replied. "But he is so godless. I wish I could understand it; he haunts the woods and mountains and yet he is ungodly."

"Yes, he is ungodly."

"Yes. And all he does is to make me frivolous. I repent afterwards of everything I say or do. No, he must go. *Ai,* he keeps saying, and what does he say that for? He is making a mistake. Oh, dear me, I won't deny that I—that he—I deny nothing, his appearance and his beard— But there is such an infinite difference. A man who haunts the woods and mountains with a nature like that!"

I heard later that the Baroness had spoken to her father. That settled it. Mack had quietly and

firmly said his word to Friar Vendt and nodded.

And Friar Vendt came to me, expressed renewed surprise at the ways of fine folks and declared that he was going. He would have to leave the Lapp till later. "When are you coming to join me?" he asked. "Later on," I replied; "I shall not be long. I am not quite ready. Wait for me."

So Friar Vendt departed.

It was now getting so late in the autumn that Sir Hugh Trevelyan had given up his fishing in the neighbouring parish and come to Sirilund to wait for the mail-boat. He lived for a few days at Mack's house and said nothing, but lay in his room and drank heavily. Since he had last been at Sirilund he had kept himself well in hand and had not taken any strong drink for two months; now he once more found pleasure in emptying many, many bottles of cognac. The Baroness took great compassion on him and asked after him daily; at last she took the tray in her own hands and carried food and coffee to Sir Hugh in his room. This occupied her a great deal and by and by her customary restlessness and melancholy passed off, as she had something else to think about. She had long talks to Sir Hugh as he lay in bed and ended by getting him to answer, and indeed to converse like a reasonable person. He told her about the silver field which he had bought of Hartvigsen, how he had paid a lot of money for it, but that did not matter, its value was fabulous. And he had a son here in the North,

his name was Hugh and he was the real owner of the silver field, the title-deeds were in his name. The rocks could stay where they were for the present, they would go up and up in value, the boy was to have them! Sir Hugh talked openly about the child being with his mother Edvarda of Torpelvik; he was going to build a house for them straight away on these rocks. What a site, a house on silver foundations! Sir Hugh had discovered all this wealth, it was the only thing he had accomplished in his life, he had made this discovery here in Nordland in Norway. "You couldn't do that!" he said. The Baroness agreed with everything he said and made the sick man well again: she even got him to leave his bed and put on his clothes.

Next day the mail-boat came and Sir Hugh left.

It seemed as though this English gentleman left an impression on the mind of the Baroness. He was no hunter, but he was a fisherman and a lonely and peculiar soul just as Glahn had been. She said of Sir Hugh that he was by no means a drunkard, but he only drank so terribly when he was bored and wanted a change of habits. At home in England he had many castles.

It was now about Finger Ring Day * and the vessels were expected home from Bergen. Hartvigsen was rejoicing at the fine weather, all was going well and the insurance money was his! Ah, it was not the little profit he thought about, but the credit of do-

* September 12.

ing a smart stroke of business in the very face of Mack. And yet it was not business but hazard, a lottery.

Already Sven Watchman's big new ship came skimming into the bay under a great press of sail. We all stood below at Hartvigsen's boat-house and watched her. And Sven Watchman scarcely touched the sails till he brought her up into the wind and anchored; then in an instant all hands were out on the yards and had her cleared of sails. And the vessel lay there well down in the water, full of goods.

"I couldn't have done that a bit better myself," said Hartvigsen.

Rosa was down there with us. She was the same as usual and only wore a big shawl over her dress on account of her condition. She was calm and friendly, with something maternal about her already; when she gave me her hand she did not measure off a scrimpy squeeze, but let it rest in mine awhile. Oh dear, in everything she did she was deeper and nobler than any one else. And I could do nothing for her in return but stand to windward and keep the cold off her.

"It is so long since we have seen you, aren't you coming to play again soon?" she said.

"I shall never play again," I answered.

And she must have guessed from my looks that I had an inner reason for answering as I did, so she did not press me with questions. On the other hand, I noticed that she tried by degrees to come

round to my other side and keep the wind off me because I was more thinly clad; but I did not allow her to do so. I still remember this, half a generation later; when she moved I had to reply by stepping higher up the rocks; in this way we gradually came away from the boat-house.

"You are quite well?" she said.

"Yes, thanks. And you?"

"Oh, thanks, we're going on as usual. It's rather slow, Benoni is always out."

I thought to myself: a little while ago she perhaps preferred her husband to be out, but now it was evidently not so. And I was glad both for her sake and his that their life had changed for the better. So things might well go on as usual.

"Benoni is out early and late," she went on. "I must say he is wonderful. I did not understand anything about it before, but now I see it. Everybody wants to get hold of him and he helps them all."

"That's true, he helps every one."

"If only we may be left in peace! I'm often so afraid, not a day passes but I'm afraid."

"Has Malene had another letter?"

"No. But that doesn't make it any better; where did the first one come from? I have now told Benoni all about it and he was like a father to me. I am as well off as I could be."

Hartvigsen hailed the vessel:

"Welcome home! Where are the others?"

Rosa and I were standing up on the rocks, we heard Sven Watchman's answer:

"The sloop can't be more than a few miles behind. But the schooner was not ready when we sailed."

"They'll all come right enough!" said Hartvigsen, nodding up to us. "For it don't make a bit of difference having womenfolk aboard. That's my belief as a simple man. Don't stay and get cold up there!" he called to us louder.

"Don't get cold yourself!" answered Rosa. "You've only your jacket on and I have a cloak and shawl."

This attention delighted Hartvigsen so much that he unbuttoned his jacket and said: "Cold!—look here." He came up to us and said to me: "You'd better come home with us, do! My wife ought not to be out in the cold."

"You will please button your jacket!" said Rosa and buttoned it with her own hands.

I felt a stab of displeasure at the sight of this affection; her kind hands struggled so deftly with the buttons and meanwhile Hartvigsen stood there proud and happy.

"Don't you ever get married," he said jokingly to me. "You'll never have a moment's peace. She thinks I'm cold. Now go home, you two, I'll come directly."

I excused myself and felt that my face went stiff and drawn.

"I expect he ought to go back," said Rosa, and perhaps she said that to help me.

"Yes," I replied and took my leave.

Rosa's last words were: "Is Edvarda keeping well? Give her my love."

Three days later the sloop came into the harbour; but the schooner had not arrived, nor had she been sighted. However, Hartvigsen nodded again, convinced that all would go well. The bay was now full of life, boats rowed to and fro discharging the vessels, and ashore both the Sirilund horses were kept at work filling warehouses and cellars with goods.

And the days went by.

I had started my little school for the two children and the way of it was that I taught the elder to read her letters and the younger to repeat them by heart. However, little Tonna learned the whole alphabet herself from her big sister, so I had nothing to do for her. Besides this, of course, I told the children a lot of fairy tales about little birds and dolls and the trees in the woods. Some of these stories I made up myself; but when another time the children demanded them again and I could not tell them exactly as before, they crowed over my inaccuracies and began to tell the story themselves. I shall never forget it, those were good and blessed days. And as a rule both children sat on my knees when we had the fairy tales.

Autumn weather set in, the rough days of the

equinox, with snow-squalls now and then to seaward. The schooner had not arrived. Hartvigsen began to find fault with the other vessels for having left her in Bergen; it was all wrong, the slow-sailing *Funtus* with her clumsy fore-and-aft rig ought to have been loaded first and given a week's start. But it came to light that the other vessels were not to blame, for Mack himself had sent a letter to his merchant at Bergen with orders that the *Funtus* was to wait till he sent a list of further goods which he required. This list was to arrive by the next mail-boat. But when Sven Watchman sailed the list had not yet come. And the *Funtus* lay waiting.

It was now wretched weather day after day, with dark nights; when the mail-boat blew her siren off Sirilund at night it was like an animal bellowing, most uncanny. "Ay ay," folks said, "it's none too smooth outside." But still Hartvigsen had no anxiety for the schooner: "It can't make a bit of difference having Bramaputra aboard," he said; "they've had a head-wind, that's all!" One evening when it was blowing hard but the sky was bright with stars I wandered down to the quays again, because it was so good to look at the stars from Hartvigsen's road. The young new moon gave no light, but the Milky Way seemed to draw a gleaming mantle across the sky.

While I stood there Hartvigsen caught sight of me from his doorstep and called to me to come down. I felt uncomfortable at being caught so near

the house, but went down to him at once. Hartvigsen was cheerful and pleased with himself: "To-night the *Funtus* will get a good push to the northward," he said; "it's clear weather and the wind's right aft."

I heard a rustle of skirts as I entered the passage; it must be Rosa going to bed, I thought.

Hartvigsen showed me all the good things Sven Watchman had bought for him in Bergen; there was a diving-dress and a Hebrew Bible. Oh, what a child, what a strange mixture of rustic sharpness and simplicity! He exhibited the diving-dress as a rarity and a treasure, watching me all the time to see if I didn't admire him.

"It isn't everybody that has a dress like that in his house," he said. "Look at his noddle, I declare it almost gives me the jumps! Now I suppose you think I haven't dared put it on; but I put it on first thing and Sven Watchman pumped the air in."

"It must feel pretty stiff when you're inside it?" I asked.

"It wouldn't do to dance in, no. Ha-ha, if so be I went to a dance in a dress like that they'd all run away from Hartwich."

Now he turned his attention to the Hebrew Bible.

"Ay, ay, the diving-dress and all that can just hang here. I'll soon have the whole place full to the roof with every kind of thing. But now what do you think of this fellow?"

It was a second-hand Bible; Hartvigsen explained

that it was not to be had new. "They say they don't print them any more, since they printed them at Luther's in Wittenberg," he said. "It's provoking that my wife's gone upstairs, perhaps you'd have read a little of it."

I read just a little of what I understood and Hartvigsen was full of admiration. He fetched wine from the sideboard and again regretted that his wife was not present. I sat there a long while, the time went by; I was not sorry that Rosa was absent, now I had no cause to fear for myself and yet I was sitting in her room.

When I left Hartvigsen's house the sky was overcast, there was no longer a star to be seen. And now a great roar came from seaward; a few flakes of snow struck my face.

XXI

THAT night the schooner *Funtus* was lost out in the fjord. It was so strange, ay, like a miracle of evil; the night was nearly gone and it happened during a half-hour's stiff snow squall; but afterwards it cleared again and grew rapidly light. But a heavy gale was blowing. The Lightkeeper had seen the end of the catastrophe from his tower: some of the crew had saved themselves in the two small boats, but both the skipper Man Ole and his wife perished. The Lightkeeper cynically ended his tale in these words: "Ah well, Bramaputra, she was lively and free with herself in her time, now she's gone under with all hands."

It was almost impossible to understand. A submerged reef? Just so, a long shoal, a ridge of rock. But what was the schooner doing so far to the westward? The fareway lay east of the lighthouse. And the *Funtus,* the great sea-monster—she stood quivering a few minutes on the reef, then glided backwards, filled with water and vanished in the deep.

Just when she had reached her goal, nay, almost in harbour!

To begin with Hartvigsen was badly shaken: two

persons who were in his pay had perished and he had lost ship and cargo! Did it not seem like a special destructive vengeance directed against his business sagacity? A plague on it! And what the hell was the schooner doing west of the light? Snow squall? Yes, but only in scuds: the light was visible a whole hour before the wreck and there were many bright intervals in that hour.

Hartvigsen pondered over this and imparted it all to me, with many curses. "No, that Man Ole didn't keep his eyes open," he said. "And what the devil did he want with womenfolk aboard his ship?" Hartvigsen blamed the skipper and Bramaputra turn and turn about.

While we were standing in the road Sven Watchman came up and was able to repeat what Man Ole himself had told him in Bergen: that the *Funtus* was to sail to the west of the lighthouse when she came home because the vessel was to be laid up in the outer bay for caulking.

"Who gave those orders?"

"Mack himself."

Hartvigsen pondered again and looked at the road and at us and thought a great deal. He was by no means pleased that Mack had given these orders behind his back.

"Come along with me to my partner," he said to us.

We found Mack in the store. Hartvigsen was strutting with pride when he began his harangue:

"I hear you ordered the *Funtus* west of the lighthouse to lay up?"

"Yes, for caulking," answered Mack.

"I thought it was me that had to do with all the outdoor management."

Mack took out his cambric handkerchief and said:

"It was done with a good intention, my dear Hartwich."

"Oh, the devil could say what intention you had!"

Mack looked at him condescendingly.

"First of all you keep the schooner at Bergen till it's black winter," Hartvigsen went on; "and what's the use of that? And then on top of that you make him sail in on a strange course at night in heavy weather. Suppose Man Ole didn't even know the Long Shoal?"

"Every child knows it. But as bad luck would have it there was a snow squall."

"Oh yes, you always have an answer ready; but I've lost ship and cargo, that makes it a bit different."

"Undeniably. I regret it sincerely," replied Mack. "You were unfortunate in your speculation. I too might have taken my own insurance in all these years I have been in business; but I never dared to do so."

Hartvigsen did not give up:

"It would have gone all right if you hadn't interfered with your orders. And I'd like to ask, for instance, what about all that cargo in the schooner?

shouted to him about the Long Shoal, but he didn't alter his course; he was white in the eyes."

So perhaps Man Ole had some purpose in steering straight for the Long Shoal, I thought. Love is hard.

As the days passed Hartvigsen became calmer and resigned himself to his immense loss. Ah, this made the third big paying out at Sirilund in my time alone, Heaven only knew if he could stand many more knocks of this kind! But Hartvigsen seemed to be so boundlessly rich, there was no end or limit to his money. When he spoke now of the insurance and of the wreck it was with great equanimity: "It was a good thing the loss fell on somebody that could bear it!" he said. If anything, it made him rather more boastful than before and he was considering the purchase of a steamer to take the schooner's place. But he seemed to have no great confidence in Mack. It is true that during the scene at the store he had held his tongue and said no more than was seemly; but he suspected his partner of great craftiness. Why should the *Funtus* go with a full cargo to the outer harbour this year more than other years? Oh, there must have been something behind it.

"The frame-mouldings have come. Now the thing is whether you will help me to frame all the pictures?" he said to me. All at once he remembered the picture I had given Rosa and wanted to pay me for it, wanted to make me a really generous

remuneration. When I declined his offer he looked at me good-naturedly and promised that where I hung it on his wall, there it should remain for ever. For his wife thought so much of that picture.

During the days when I was making the frames for Hartvigsen's paintings I often met Rosa alone or with Martha. Rosa had now begun to give the child lessons herself and she was admirably fitted to do so. One day another hundred dollars arrived for the woman Malene, but still no letter. This was very mysterious and sounded like a made-up tale, but Gilbert the Lapp had turned up again and brought Rosa the news; afterwards Rosa had been to see old Malene and was shown both the money and the envelope.

Rosa said:

"It was not Nikolai's writing, but the money comes from him."

"I see," I said.

"Yes, but Benoni says he's dead!" she exclaimed. "And I've been to Mack and Mack says he's dead."

"You mustn't take this so much to heart," I said, with an attempt to smooth it over. "At any rate he'll never come back."

"It is all so wicked," she replied. "One ought never to change, nobody ought to change. And now perhaps he is alive."

Then I felt as it were heartily sick of her morbid memories and at the same time jealous of this everlasting Nikolai. I said:

gotten that. And Rosa had called me a child. It was cast in my teeth that I had done well at school and learnt a great deal; I drew better than many a painter and painted better than any draughtsman; Tidemand—*Tidemand* had been to my home and seen my pictures and nodded! I was nineteen then. And then too, I had learnt to play the piano like any other girl; but every girl had not learnt that, amongst others the Baroness; but I had. Had I fallen among a lot of barbarians?

I felt so bitterly misunderstood and slighted; ah, at that time I had not learnt resignation. Now I can see that I was only a harmless and proficient youth with the qualifications of an office clerk; I found this out as the years went by.

But still I felt by no means vanquished; I had only taken the wrong line, I thought. For a while I continually asked myself: what would Friar Vendt have done in my place? Oh, Friar Vendt was a rake and a careless soul, he would have said: it's nothing but tricks and tomfoolery; give me love! He would not have spent the night in star-gazing.

And I was not going to do so any more either.

XXII

THERE was no frost, the snow came and lay on thawed ground. But a mass of snow fell. Before they could use the sledges the farm hands had to get help in the daytime to make a track up to the wood and the mill; this froze a little at night and made a road for the sledges next day.

I met the Hookmaker, who disliked all this snow because he had to steal a chance of drying Mack's feather-bed in the wash-house. It was not the free life he was accustomed to. Besides this he was exasperated with his room-mate, the ancient Fredrik Mensa, who still lay bedridden and never died. The Hookmaker said that neither fair means nor foul were of any use against that obstinate life; once indeed he had tried stuffing wool into the pauper's nostrils at night, but in the morning he lay there just the same with long flocks of wool hanging from his nose, breathing through his mouth. It was an aggravating and bitter sight; the Hookmaker had to remove the wool himself. And Fredrik Mensa said Tut–tut–tut–tut–tut with pleasure at being able to breathe through his nose again.

"It's not fit to say, all the things he fills the room with," said the Hookmaker of his mate. "I get choked sometimes, my eyes grow dim with sorrow at so much filthiness. But if I open the window at night there's always somebody about that sees or hears it and they come from this side or that and say I must shut the window again or else Fredrik Mensa will be ill. But good luck to him if he does get ill! Yes, I say that straight out. He's maybe a hundred and ten or a hundred and twenty, it makes me want to spit to think of such an age. God forgive my sins, it isn't human, it's bestial! He eats day and night, the Doctor says it's his stomach that's so strong. Now if only he'd get colic and I for instance had to poultice him, you bet your life he'd have some poulticing! There's no sense at all in him now; if only God would take him in Jesu name, I'd get the room to myself. I want it, many's the time I'm itching to open the window; but as long as that corpse—he's nothing else—lies there alive, I can't do it. And 'tut–tut' he says all the time, that's his little joke as long as he's awake. But that isn't talking, it's more like speaking to somebody in the air or such like. I've tried warbling in his ears to pass the time for him; but he only puts on an ugly face and looks as doleful as if he felt a gimlet running into him. And it isn't worth while changing his shirt either, there's no need for it at all, he's just the same again next minute, his bed's full of food and spoons and bits

of bread and he makes a filthy mess spitting all over the floor and up the wall."

It was shocking to hear what the Hookmaker said; he was a wicked person who had forgotten that we ought to honour the aged and rather let the young suffer than bring sorrow to old age. I answered that he would be doing a good deed in the sight of God and man by nursing the decrepit pauper with care and sparing no pains to bring him water to drink and tuck him up in bed. "But I'm choked with the stink at night!" cried the Hookmaker. Oh, he was so hardened!

He would sit and have long talks with Heavytop about Bramaputra, saying that now she was dead, but she had been loved by all. And Man Ole had been a good and useful man too, but he gave nobody any peace and he had such a hasty temper. But Bramaputra she had never been hasty, far from it, she was sweet-tempered all the time; oh, she had never been too proud to put up with a bit of love no matter what quarter it came from.

"No, no," agreed Heavytop, wagging his immense head.

"And for that we must honour her in her watery grave," said the Hookmaker.

Of this pair it was the Hookmaker who chiefly profited by the other's friendship. He made Heavytop mount guard for him while he was busy with his secret employment in the wash-house and besides he used him constantly as a butt for his fun. But

so powerful and terrible was Heavytop that one day when he had turned on his tormentor and squeezed him a little the Hookmaker's tongue hung out of the corner of his mouth. And for a couple of days he could get no food down because his throat was so badly dislocated internally.

Time and again there occurred some skirmish or other among all the people of this big place. Sirilund was like a little town with its wide-spread houses and squares and it was advisable to keep a good look-out and not turn a corner too suddenly if one wished to avoid trouble. Now a man like Sven Watchman might be of an unusually peaceful disposition, but he was not blind and deaf and he did not shut his eyes to everything. On rare occasions he got drunk and only then did he burst into song and merriment, but it ended in dark threats. Little Ellen, his wife, that had once been Ellen Parlourmaid, then had to devote herself to him alone and assure him that she loved him better than any one else in the world. But it came about, shortly before Christmas, that Sven Watchman was not pacified by little Ellen's assurances and did not calm down until Hartvigsen had come and talked to him for an hour.

Sven Watchman had once been a good singer and dancer, but now his humour had deserted him and he preferred looking on at a dance to taking part in it. He and Ellen had a child, a boy with brown

eyes; but both the father's and the mother's eyes were blue, and it was no secret that Mack himself was the father of the child. Oh, Mack must have had many children scattered about among the families of his dependents; he took care to marry off the mothers in good time and even after that he showed a lordly interest in their welfare. It was reckoned that Mack now had mistresses in nine families at Sirilund, besides all the rest elsewhere in the district. And now it fell out that young Petrine Parlourmaid had to be married. And there was no suitable husband for her but the Hookmaker.

That Hookmaker! He was nothing more than a wretched playboy and bird-warbler and could work at nothing properly; but he had got on the right side of Mack and carried out all the little jobs his master entrusted to him. Petrine was a lass in her eighteenth year, but big and fine for her age; it was a sight to see her walk across the yard. But as the Hookmaker was now to set up house it was doubly necessary that the parish pauper should die at once and leave the little room vacant. God grant a speedy release to Fredrik Mensa!

Now Hartvigsen was sitting and chatting of these things with Sven Watchman and at Hartvigsen's invitation I had joined them. Sven Watchman was becoming more of a man again after his intoxication and only swore an oath or two; Hartvigsen used no

oaths, but promised that there should be a change in Mack's wild life.

"I won't hear of it any longer," he said, "and I'm the only one that can go and take his power away. I can go and do it any day and hour I please!"

"You'll be doing a good deed," replied Sven Watchman. "We can't keep our womenfolk in peace. Now Christmas is coming and there'll be the ransacking, it's the regular thing."

Hartvigsen answered:

"That's just according to what I and that B. Hartwich decide about it. Whether there's to be any ransacking or not."

Hartvigsen had not been broken by the wreck and his great loss; no, he puffed himself up worse than ever and was always boasting of his power. He had now firmly made up his mind to operate privately outside the business and buy a steamer before next winter, and he would not send his dried fish to Bergen but direct to the land of Spain while he was about it, and then he would be like the merchant in Bergen! He bore a bitter grudge against Mack and I am sure he was waiting for a good chance of avenging himself for the loss. So it sounded to me. "I'll get my own back right enough!" he said and nodded at his own thoughts. As we left Sven Watchman, he asked me once again to move back to his house and be tutor to Martha. He felt it as nothing short of an ignominy that there should

be a tutor at Sirilund and none at his house.

"It's just as if I couldn't afford to keep a tutor," he said. "But as far as pay goes you shall receive double from this my hand!" he said. "Come along home now and then my wife can talk to you about it."

When we had gone part of the way Hartvigsen remembered that he had some business at Sirilund and let me go on alone. Ah, Hartvigsen again had business at Sirilund, with Baroness Edvarda, who was bored to death and had to have an honest soul to bullyrag. She had told him all about the affair of Lieutenant Glahn and was now working to turn the head of Hartvigsen. And Rosa calmly looked on, she was cured of her jealousy and had something else to think of.

I did not find her in the parlour. So she and Martha must be out, I thought. But to avoid any appearance of my having stolen into her house again in her husband's absence I wrote on a piece of paper that Hartvigsen himself had asked me to come. Then I heard Rosa's and Martha's footsteps above; they both came down and Rosa stopped in surprise at the doorway. She said in embarrassment:

"We have been upstairs doing lessons. Not much in the way of lessons, but . . ."

What made her embarrassed? Rosa had had a very good education and learnt much, so she could certainly teach Martha to read and write.

Probably her confusion was only due to her condition, and it was touching and beautiful. Never had I seen her so sweet and enchantingly beautiful.

"You may go to Sirilund," she said to the child. "Benoni is with Sven Watchman; didn't you see him?"

I answered:

"Yes. I have stolen in here again to find you alone."

She shook her head, but I had the idea that she was less displeased with me than before, she smiled a little. I continued in the same tone, thinking: that is what Friar Vendt would have done.

"I keep on coming here because I am impelled to do so," I said. "I cannot bear it much longer."

"I am a married woman," she replied.

"But I saw you long before you were married and from the first day I was yours."

Oh, I cannot forget that at these words she looked at me inquisitively and half gladly. I don't know, perhaps only inquisitively.

"But, great Heavens, I cannot be yours!" she exclaimed. "I can't make out what you want."

"What I want! What does one want? Are you a stone or a human being? I am tired out with tricks and tomfoolery, I have come to make an end of it. Do with me as you will."

Oh, fool that I was, I thought again that she was

a little glad at my showing so much enterprise and fire; her lips trembled as though I had touched her. Then she caught sight of the paper on the table and read my excuse for coming; it must have dawned on her that I was not so bold and tempestuous as I had tried to make out.

"Oh, then Benoni asked you to come here," she said. "I guessed as much."

I made no answer to this, but I was not going to abandon my ardour; it was going so well now. I placed myself before her, looked at her and said suddenly: *"Ai!"*

Then she looked back at me and began to laugh a little and asked:

"What's the matter with you? Now do be calm."

My heart was jumping up and down, it was with great inward fear that I took a step forward and threw my arms around her. I was trembling so and did not say a word, but tried to bring my head close to hers, to her throat and neck. It lasted scarcely a second, she had no difficulty in freeing herself from my arms, and suddenly she let drive at me under the ear with the palm of her hand. I heard something like a wheel spinning round in my head and I tumbled into a chair.

A box on the ear!

Poor Rosa, she had great trouble in comforting me and making up for the blow; I was very slow in

oaths, but promised that there should be a change in Mack's wild life.

"I won't hear of it any longer," he said, "and I'm the only one that can go and take his power away. I can go and do it any day and hour I please!"

"You'll be doing a good deed," replied Sven Watchman. "We can't keep our womenfolk in peace. Now Christmas is coming and there'll be the ransacking, it's the regular thing."

Hartvigsen answered:

"That's just according to what I and that B. Hartwich decide about it. Whether there's to be any ransacking or not."

Hartvigsen had not been broken by the wreck and his great loss; no, he puffed himself up worse than ever and was always boasting of his power. He had now firmly made up his mind to operate privately outside the business and buy a steamer before next winter, and he would not send his dried fish to Bergen but direct to the land of Spain while he was about it, and then he would be like the merchant in Bergen! He bore a bitter grudge against Mack and I am sure he was waiting for a good chance of avenging himself for the loss. So it sounded to me. "I'll get my own back right enough!" he said and nodded at his own thoughts. As we left Sven Watchman, he asked me once again to move back to his house and be tutor to Martha. He felt it as nothing short of an ignominy that there should

be a tutor at Sirilund and none at his house.

"It's just as if I couldn't afford to keep a tutor," he said. "But as far as pay goes you shall receive double from this my hand!" he said. "Come along home now and then my wife can talk to you about it."

When we had gone part of the way Hartvigsen remembered that he had some business at Sirilund and let me go on alone. Ah, Hartvigsen again had business at Sirilund, with Baroness Edvarda, who was bored to death and had to have an honest soul to bullyrag. She had told him all about the affair of Lieutenant Glahn and was now working to turn the head of Hartvigsen. And Rosa calmly looked on, she was cured of her jealousy and had something else to think of.

I did not find her in the parlour. So she and Martha must be out, I thought. But to avoid any appearance of my having stolen into her house again in her husband's absence I wrote on a piece of paper that Hartvigsen himself had asked me to come. Then I heard Rosa's and Martha's footsteps above; they both came down and Rosa stopped in surprise at the doorway. She said in embarrassment:

"We have been upstairs doing lessons. Not much in the way of lessons, but . . ."

What made her embarrassed? Rosa had had a very good education and learnt much, so she could certainly teach Martha to read and write.

Probably her confusion was only due to her condition, and it was touching and beautiful. Never had I seen her so sweet and enchantingly beautiful.

"You may go to Sirilund," she said to the child. "Benoni is with Sven Watchman; didn't you see him?"

I answered:

"Yes. I have stolen in here again to find you alone."

She shook her head, but I had the idea that she was less displeased with me than before, she smiled a little. I continued in the same tone, thinking: that is what Friar Vendt would have done.

"I keep on coming here because I am impelled to do so," I said. "I cannot bear it much longer."

"I am a married woman," she replied.

"But I saw you long before you were married and from the first day I was yours."

Oh, I cannot forget that at these words she looked at me inquisitively and half gladly. I don't know, perhaps only inquisitively.

"But, great Heavens, I cannot be yours!" she exclaimed. "I can't make out what you want."

"What I want! What does one want? Are you a stone or a human being? I am tired out with tricks and tomfoolery, I have come to make an end of it. Do with me as you will."

Oh, fool that I was, I thought again that she was

a little glad at my showing so much enterprise and fire; her lips trembled as though I had touched her. Then she caught sight of the paper on the table and read my excuse for coming; it must have dawned on her that I was not so bold and tempestuous as I had tried to make out.

"Oh, then Benoni asked you to come here," she said. "I guessed as much."

I made no answer to this, but I was not going to abandon my ardour; it was going so well now. I placed myself before her, looked at her and said suddenly: *"Ai!"*

Then she looked back at me and began to laugh a little and asked:

"What's the matter with you? Now do be calm."

My heart was jumping up and down, it was with great inward fear that I took a step forward and threw my arms around her. I was trembling so and did not say a word, but tried to bring my head close to hers, to her throat and neck. It lasted scarcely a second, she had no difficulty in freeing herself from my arms, and suddenly she let drive at me under the ear with the palm of her hand. I heard something like a wheel spinning round in my head and I tumbled into a chair.

A box on the ear!

Poor Rosa, she had great trouble in comforting me and making up for the blow; I was very slow in

coming to my senses. She talked to me and laughed a little and asked a number of questions: "What do you mean? Where did you learn to do that? I've never seen such a thing! There, you're not to worry any more about it."

When my head cleared I relapsed into my wretched humility; I was only glad that Rosa had not shown me the door. No, Friar Vendt's way was no good to me, my nature was different from his, he could lay hands on any one he liked. Oh, he had a charter to do mad things and be excused for them on the spot!

Gradually Rosa and I returned to our usual footing. She sat down to talk to me with her former ease and asked:

"You were so different last time too, so hasty in your manner. Do you remember?"

"It must have been only a coincidence," I replied evasively.

"And why do you come to see us so seldom now?" she said. "Both Benoni and I have been talking about it."

I was reduced to meekness and prostration; I answered with my old melancholy:

"I'll come, I'll come; yes, thanks, I'll always come. But perhaps you are happier when I am away, it appears so. You sit here at your ease the whole time, but as soon as I come you do nothing but tell me of things that happened long ago and

make yourself sad. I would rather stay away more and know that you are cheerful."

But later on I made up my mind to try Friar Vendt's method just once more before I gave it up. For it had worked so well at the start.

XXIII

ONCE more the Baroness had nothing to do but to turn religious. How excited and unhappy she was! Her intrigue with Hartvigsen had not contented her for more than a week or two, and it was no real intrigue either, but only a desultory, aimless game; Hartvigsen did not understand a single word of what she said.

Then she caused her father's feather-bed to be burnt, did the Baroness, and it was Jens Bairnsfather, her sworn slave, who found a chance to do the deed. Jens Bairnsfather was a wily fellow, he waited for a moonlight night when the feathers were being dried in the wash-house and dropped a lump of burning tow down the chimney; the feathers took fire on the hearth below and were spoilt in an instant. And then the long-legged Jens Bairnsfather took a couple of big jumps down from the roof and behind the next house. I saw it all from my window.

Yes, I was an eye-witness of it all because I was on the look-out. The Baroness had not concealed from me what was to happen; she was openly and honestly against her father for holding these scandalous performances with baths and girls in his house. And she made me a party to her plan with-

out insisting upon silence. I must confess I appreciated her confidence and was afterwards silent as the grave; the Baroness impressed me greatly by this trait of good breeding, she was indeed a superior and ladylike woman.

But Mack, that imperial soul, would not have been the Baroness's father and a great magnate if he had been at a loss. When the Hookmaker came and reported the disaster Mack instantly sent out word that he was buying feathers and down at a high price; I was told that he had been obliged to do the same thing once before in order to obtain a new feather-bed for his bath by Christmas. And sure enough, once more it was only a couple of days before a great supply of fine down was brought to Sirilund by those who owned bird-rocks around the fjord.

So it was a waste of time burning Mack's feather-bed.

But the Baroness was still very obstinate and religious, she conscientiously meditated how she might put a stop to her father's Christmas profligacy; when she mentioned the ransacking she compressed her lips tightly and nodded. This ransacking consisted in the women of Sirilund concealing about them a silver fork or spoon during supper on Christmas Eve and then having to go up to Mack's room and hand it over. Oh, Mack could find plenty of forks and spoons; the liberties he took were said to be incredible and there might be as many as six women in his

room one after the other that evening. He was a very wild and dissolute man. But what astonished me was the order and discipline he was able to maintain among all these girls and women who were privy to his way of life. All the year round there was never a complaint against him, but on the contrary the greatest respect. He must have had an extraordinary gift of authority and used it in the right way; to me it was a great riddle.

Christmas was now approaching with rapid steps and there was tremendous traffic at Sirilund, of people in sledges and on foot; the store, the wharves and the cellars were never empty all day long. I received an invitation from Rosa's parents, the clergyman of the neighbouring parish and his wife, to spend Christmas with them; they were so lonely and I could cheer them up if I came. When I spoke to the Baroness and Mack about it they said they would miss me, but that I should be doing Pastor Barfod and his wife a pleasure; afterwards I spoke to Rosa and she asked me to go. I therefore decided to set out for the neighbouring parish the day before Christmas Eve and to walk across the common.

Just at this time it looked as though God would remember old Fredrik Mensa and grant him release; his stomach, which had hitherto been proof against anything, now went wrong and he had a dangerous illness. His daughter, who was married to the under-miller and was a particularly capable and

respectable woman, came to her father's sickbed and did not leave it for a whole night; but she had little children at home and could not stay away from them for long. When she went home the Hookmaker was put to nursing the invalid with hot poultices, and it was wicked the way he behaved. After a day or two it came out that the Hookmaker was putting ice in the poultices, he even did what was worse and rubbed the sick man's stomach constantly with lumps of ice. This treatment made the ancient alarmingly worse from hour to hour and he had fits which lifted him right off the bed and twisted his mouth till it reached his ear. Never had this tough old man been so ill; he could not understand it and yelled loudly; unfortunately he seemed at the same time to recover a memory of what he had been used to in his conscious life on earth when anything was wrong: he swore great oaths and spat till the place was swimming. It was shocking to hear and see him and it was only when he relapsed into imbecility and had a short respite from his pain that the ancient said tut–tut, otherwise he swore immoderately. That would make the Hookmaker rush out of the room in a great fright; ah, he had entirely forgotten that we ought to honour the aged and hearken to them.

But the worthy Fredrik Mensa did not give up the ghost this time either. The Hookmaker's depravity was discovered and he was forbidden to have any more to do with the poultices. He was asked

whether he wished to kill the old man. "No, far from it," he answered; "in the parts where I come from we always rub ourselves with ice for the colic," he said. When the Baroness was told of the affair she became more religious than ever and set Jens Bairnsfather to look after the sick man. Truly there was a great deal of good in the Baroness.

And Fredrik Mensa recovered, he was so gloriously strong and sound inside. Under Jens Bairnsfather's care he took a fresh lease of life and lay there imbecile as before, but God be thanked with a fine capacity for eating and sleeping. And truly it was a great satisfaction to us all that the ancient was well again, so that we were spared sickness and death in the house at Christmas time; nay, it gave us an innocent and cheerful feeling simply to know that Fredrik Mensa lay there and to hear him drawing breath. And if we asked him anything he just said, as hale and hearty as could be, "Tut–tut–tut–tut–tut!" and that was his answer.

It was now settled that I was to go the next morning. I had already received my Christmas presents, many nice and excellent things from everybody, from the little girls and their mother and from Mack himself. I just took a little turn down to the quays before going to bed, and, as I was doing no harm thereby, I nodded to Rosa's house. It was true that I should pass the same way in the morning, but I gave this little farewell nod the night before, that I

might sleep the better. Good-night, God bless you!

I woke while it was still dark, lit my candle and dressed myself; I had a long way to go and wished to arrive in good time. I took some food, commended myself to God and set out on my way. On passing Rosa's house I nodded once more and wished all its inmates a happy Christmas.

It was a grey dawn and misty weather, there was even a little snow falling. But the road was quite good, though no sledges had yet passed along it. I had been given full instructions about the way so that I should not go wrong; besides, this path led nowhere but over the mountain. When I had come a short distance across the common I heard voices and saw a group of people: there was Hartvigsen and there was Sven Watchman and two other men; they had picks and spades in their hands and were digging a big grave.

Hartvigsen just nodded to me and gave an order:

"Get the grave finished, boys. It's to be eight foot long and six foot wide. I'm only going a little way with the student."

"Who is to be buried here?" I asked rather playfully. "It looks like a grave for two."

But Hartvigsen was solemn and would not smile.

"I will go so far as to say that it's a serious grave," he replied. "For now Mack's bath-tub and feather-bed are going to be buried."

"What do you say!"

Hartvigsen nodded.

"And there's nobody else that can take the power from him but myself."

So this is how Hartvigsen means to pay out his partner for the loss, I thought; now he has found the good chance he was looking for. Oh, Hartvigsen never forgot that he came to grief over that insurance on his own ship. And now he had gone into the woods, taking with him three men who were all interested in getting Mack's bath-tub sunk into the ground; they were Sven Watchman, the blacksmith and the cooper, and I daresay there were the husbands of six or a dozen other wives who would gladly have lent a hand at digging this grave.

"What will be the consequences?" I said, thinking that Mack was never at a loss.

And Hartvigsen was not so very sure either, there was none of his usual swagger and "I'll take the consequences!" On the contrary, he began to explain and asked if I thought it would work: now Mack had advertised for feathers and down, prices were running up, it paid people to leave their work and scour the shore for birds. Was that sort of thing decent? Now Christmas was coming and Christmas Eve, the men would get drunk as usual and the womenfolk would go up to Mack's room one by one.

"The thing is whether Mack will put up with the loss of his bath-tub?" I said.

Hartvigsen grew still more serious as he thought

about this, for Mack was undeniably a man who enjoyed respect.

"It's this way, you see," Hartvigsen replied; "I'm not the only one that's got a hand in this funeral—as I may call it. Edvarda has been helping all along and I don't mind saying it's she who has done the whole thing."

This at once made the affair less risky in my eyes; the Baroness had a powerful hand, it was not the first time she had crossed her father's plans.

"Then I have no more misgivings," I declared.

"You can understand," said Hartvigsen more cheerfully, "that we couldn't even have got the bath-tub out of the house without her help. It was she who sent all the servants out of the way. And I must say it's a pity to see how sorrowful and religious she is; we'd have to be made of stone not to help her with this."

The cooper came and reported solemnly:

"All's ready!"

Then we went to the grave, the men fetched the bath-tub, which had been hidden among the osiers, and it was decently lowered into the grave with the feather-bed and pillow. Some sacks were spread over it as though to prevent its being soiled.

There lay that zinc tub, that terrible bed for three, awaiting its disappearance; the blacksmith himself had fashioned it and soldered it out of big sheets of zinc. And the feather-bed was covered in rose-coloured silk.

"In a brief while this bath-tub will be no more," said Hartvigsen, with no thought of joking by a graveside. "Do your duty, men."

The blacksmith and the cooper began to fill in the grave.

I then took my leave and continued my way. It came on to snow a little more, making the path slippery for walking; but with God's help I arrived at the distant parsonage long before daylight was gone. And I was received with the greatest joy.

Here I stayed for the whole of Christmas; nothing happened that is specially worth noting down, except that my thoughts and feelings were manifold in this pleasant home. I saw all the things that Rosa had sewed and knitted and I felt her spirit about me in these rooms where so many years of her life had been passed. Indeed, I was overwhelmed by emotion and wept frequently. When I came upon books or music on which Rosa had written her name I had to make a great effort to control myself, and there was not a stair or a path that I trod without thinking: here Rosa's feet have passed! And indeed the clergyman and his wife asked me many questions about their daughter, whether she was in good health and happy and getting on well? "Oh yes, she is," I answered. I shame to confess that perhaps I lied to these good people, for I am sure Rosa had many cares at heart.

Pastor Barfod was a great preacher and had a full congregation during the holy days. But what

pleased him best was to wander through the woods and fields and watch everything about him and give each thing a thought; he told me himself that he was never so near to God as in the woods. In a way he was no religious man, but an experienced and good man; he read German and French and knew a great deal.

As we could not go shooting before the New Year the clergyman, his wife and I sat together for many hours every day talking of various things; at these times Fru Barfod might be busy with her patience at the card-table; she was a quiet and gentle lady and wore a lace cap like my mother. Then in the twilight, which lasted a very long time at midwinter, I sat at the piano and played all that I knew by heart; after supper when all the candles were lighted I played again for a while, using the music Rosa had left behind. They were peaceful hours, all of them. And one day I was out for a long walk to the farms in the neighbourhood.

Our shooting did not come to very much; but now and then the Pastor lent me one of his guns and took me out with him. I expect he soon found out that I was no great sportsman, but that I had both taste and aptitude for sport and only needed experience. The Pastor was a thoughtful and intelligent man, he knew a great deal about beasts and birds and woods and rocks from his own observation; I on the other hand knew but little of natural history and even that was not always right. Thus Pastor Bar-

fod asserted that what the books taught about useful and noxious animals was very superficial: no animal was noxious, one species kept the other in check. If one shot too many crows there would be too many mice; if one exterminated the fox, the squirrel would multiply dangerously. And then the squirrel cleared the woods of small birds' eggs; but if there were no small birds the insect became a regular plague. Oh no, Nature is wise and regulates herself.

All this was new doctrine to me. But after these days of sport I would no longer appear so ignorant of everything when I commenced my ramble with Friar Vendt.

On Twelfth Day I took my leave of the parsonage and went back to Sirilund. When I came to the grave of the bath-tub the place was neatly smoothed over and all traces were well hidden by fresh snow.

XXIV

CHRISTMAS was over, but it had not passed off without somewhat serious disturbances at Sirilund.

Christmas Eve had gone off fairly quietly; the Baroness had done her father out of his searching of the women of the place, she had gone into the kitchen herself and demanded the return of all forks and spoons. The cooper's and the under-miller's wives did not give in without a struggle, but the Baroness got Jens Bairnsfather to pinch them into black-and-blue submission and then all the silver was forthcoming.

But Mack had revenged himself for this breach of custom by not going to bed at all that night; he left his house and did not come back till morning. Nobody knew where he had been and he said nothing about it himself, but seemed quite pleased with his night. He even talked to the little girls and was in every way his usual calm and well-bred self.

But now the trouble was that in burying the bath-tub they had buried the Hookmaker's means of livelihood. What job was there for this man to turn his hand to? And was it not high time his sweetheart, Petrine Parlourmaid, was married off? The

whole thing seemed very perplexing and the Baroness and Hartvigsen held serious consultations.

But the worst of all was that Mack himself took to being indisposed. His life was thrown out of gear without his beloved baths, they were a necessity and an indispensable comfort to him. But it was not to be expected that Hartvigsen, who never took a bath himself, should be able to appreciate this, nor could he make out for that matter why two women were part of the process. So relations became strained between the two partners, in fact they met without exchanging a word. And now what made it worse was that it was time for the vessels to be sent to Lofoten, so there was much to be arranged.

"I'm beginning more and more to lose my estimation for him," said Hartvigsen of his partner. "Well, let him keep on at his fooling, it's me that has to keep an eye on everything anyway."

The fact that the bath-tub had disappeared without Mack's ever referring to it made Hartvigsen very big and consequential; he began to assume the whole merit of having removed this zinc monster from the earth's surface and had incredible ideas of his power and influence. If he had been able to spare Sven Watchman from the Lofoten trip he would no doubt have sent him out to buy a steamer so that he might ship his dried fish to Spain. Oh, his self-conceit was apt to take ridiculous forms: his last idea was to go to church in the diving-dress.

"What do you think about it?" he asked me. As

I was struck speechless and made no answer, he went on: "I should say no man has ever gone to church before me in a dress like that and don't you think there'd be more folks looking at me than at the parson? Well, of course, I'll take Sven Watchman with me to pump it up."

And I reflected that this man who had appeared at his wedding in sledging boots simply to show off their fur tops to the skerry folk was quite capable of going to church in a diving-dress; ah, he might well be as crazy as that. When Hartvigsen insisted on an answer I shook my head and tried to dissuade him.

"Oh yes, you're always so quiet and demure about it," he said. "But it would be a grand dress to go to church in. And what am I to do with it? It's just hanging there. Besides, Edvarda thinks I can do it."

And the good Baroness Edvarda was reckless enough; she was tormented by all kinds of irritation, alternating between melancholy and religiousness, and she could find room in her heart for stubborn malice at times. And she could be very kind and tender too, but only when she took it into her head to be so. Such was the variability of the Baroness.

But now Hartvigsen got something else to think about besides going to church in his diving-dress: one morning Mack came down to the office with a broad red-flannel band round his waist. Several people saw it and the report spread over the whole place.

So what must have happened was that Mack had been attacked by serious stomach trouble.

We all felt a shock, young and old alike; but Mack himself did not complain or make a fuss about his ailment, he only ate less than usual and when the Baroness asked after his health he replied indifferently: "It is only a slight aggravation of my stomach trouble."

The next few days went by; Sirilund seemed rather quieter than before, but Mack simply went about in his red-flannel band and stood at his desk as usual; there was no danger. But we were all conscious of a certain oppression and Hartvigsen gave up all idea of his visit to church.

Now the fishermen were off to Lofoten and the vessels lay ready for sea. It was a busy time, the crews had to see to their gear and provisioning; the skippers, Sven Watchman and Villads the wharfinger, had to complete their fitting out. Suddenly one day the office was empty, Mack did not come down, he kept his bed.

What a disturbance it made in the whole establishment and far around! Hartvigsen was there, yes, of course Hartvigsen was everywhere; but the office remained empty. All the books and accounts, letters and telegrams, market reports, prices of bait and salt—no, Hartvigsen was up in none of these things and he could not cope with this terrible mess. And in what part of Lofoten was fish being signalled, which stations were the vessels to make for? There

were several expresses about this on Mack's desk and Mack had always given his orders accordingly; but this year Mack was absent. Hartvigsen came to me and wanted to know if I could help him to interpret an express about mussels; it gave some prices and figures which were nothing but a riddle.

Then Hartvigsen got a message from Mack to come to his sick-bed. You see, Mack was not a man who just went sick and took no thought for his great business, far from it; "Let my partner come!" he said, "and let him bring all the mail and all the telegrams from my desk," he said. He was a great man at all times. So Hartvigsen went to Mack and was told how everything was to be worked out and made to show a profit, and Hartvigsen went back to the office and threw out his chest and used big words about all the things he had on his hands and had to work out. But I am sure a great deal of it was done at haphazard, Hartvigsen knew so little, he was rich and nothing else. "Here's something about some empty flour-sacks and it calls them *Tare,*" he said; "but they're made of sacking. What kind of a language is that?" And truly it was an irksome life for Hartvigsen to be running upstairs to Mack every moment of the day to ask him about all these things. "I'll be glad when my partner's on his feet again," said Hartvigsen.

He was really left pretty helpless. To be sure, the two store clerks were old hands and knew the work behind the counter inside out, but nothing

more. To make matters worse Hartvigsen had to take a hand even in the business of the store. People had made a habit of dealing with Hartvigsen and would not have any one else; they saw the advantage of applying to him when the two store clerks refused them credit, and Hartvigsen was not a man you applied to in vain. There was truly something fine and stirring in the way he settled a thing with just one little word. When the fisherman came with his tale of woe Hartvigsen would call across to Steen the store clerk: "Ay ay, the man has a family, you'll have to put it down in B. Hartwich his big book!" That ended it. When Aron of the Hope came, that erstwhile owner of the valuable silver rocks, Hartvigsen scored out all his old debts with his own hand and let him have his whole outfit for Lofoten for nothing. The same Aron now passed among his fellows for a very warm man.

Mack did not get on his feet; he went from bad to worse till his cheeks were pale and fallen in. The Doctor came. Medicines were compounded and there were different doses for morning and evening. But Mack did not get better. Finally the office and the whole business had to come almost to a standstill. There was great confusion over the whole of Sirilund and nothing went as it ought.

I went to see Rosa and brought her greetings from her parents; Hartvigsen was present. Nothing much was said between us, except that I also gave Rosa greetings from her room at home and

from the music she had left behind, as well as from the maids at the parsonage. She listened to it all and was affected, no doubt owing to her condition.

"My wife's all in a fright about one thing and another," said Hartvigsen. "I'd be glad if you'd talk to her a bit."

"I hope Edvarda is quite well?" asked Rosa to change the subject.

Hartvigsen got up, rather hurt, and remarked:

"Oh well, I didn't mean any harm."

Then he took his hat and went out.

Rosa followed him, there were a few words in the passage, and when Rosa came in again her eyes were red. Then she said:

"It was only—I can't get him to put on enough clothes this cold weather."

Pause.

"And then I can bring you a greeting from your room at home," I said.

"Oh yes, thanks, you've said that already."

"I was in there every day, many times a day, I saw the whole place from your window. One night I got up and went in there."

She glanced up at me quickly and said:

"Now you're not to begin again, you're to be good!"

"No, I'm not going to begin again. I only wanted to see what met your eyes when you woke at night and looked out—the starry sky and the northern lights, a farm a mile away."

"That was Moa."

"Yes, that was Moa. I went there one day."

"You were quite right. How is the daughter getting on? Her name is Antora, she's so pretty."

"Yes, she was pretty. She had your eyes. I sketched her and said I wanted a kiss for the picture. And she nodded. Then I went to Torpelvik."

"Oh," said Rosa, "so you kissed Antora?"

"Yes, on the eyes."

Rosa's lips quivered a little and she said suddenly:

"On the eyes? No, I really don't know how I'm to treat you. Are you so much in love with me still?"

"Yes," said I.

"So you went to Torpelvik. There's nobody there. There's only Edvarda who——"

"Yes, she's had a child by the Englishman, Sir Hugh Trevelyan. A quiet and comely mother, she gave me food and drink; she was so trustful, I was allowed to hold the baby while she got the meal ready. She said it was a shame I should do so, but there she was wrong, for it was a fine, bonny baby."

"Where did you go after that?"

"And when I left Edvarda said: 'Thank you for coming!' "

"Well, I never heard the like!"

"No, nor I; and she had given me food and drink —and let me hold the baby!"

"Well, then I suppose you went to the Sheriff's? But there's nobody there."

"No," I said, "there was nobody there, there was nobody anywhere. I walked and walked, but there was nobody. So I turned back to the parsonage. And the next day I stood in your room and looked out over the wide tracts I had covered without finding anybody."

"Well, but, dear me, you weren't everywhere," said Rosa with a smile.

"Oh yes, I was at many other places too."

"And you didn't find anybody?"

"Yes, to tell the truth, I did find one. I was not out courting, I was only scouring the country for some one to take a fancy to. And at one place I sat for a long time and felt happy, that was with Edvarda of Torpelvik."

Rosa turned scarlet and said in an offended tone:

"Are you quite crazy?"

"She was not made of stone," I said.

"No, but— Of stone? What nonsense you talk!"

Yes, Friar Vendt was right, I admitted the truth of his words. The very first day I met him in the woods he had said: "Do you love in vain? There is a cure for that: all you have to do is to let your eyes rest for a moment on some one 'unworthy'— then you will see! Then the first one will come to you, will fling herself into your arms, for she cannot bear to see you throw yourself away, she will rescue you, raise you from the depths. A decent woman is full of blind hostility towards an indecent one," said

Friar Vendt, "she will go so far as to sacrifice herself to save you from the other." Friar Vendt had experienced this in his own life and the great Lady Iselin of Os was the example. Oh, Friar Vendt was an extraordinarily subtle person.

What then? I had not Friar Vendt's nature and now I was once more at a loss. Rosa found something to do, but I could see that she was offended and that it was only a pretence her dusting the piano time after time. "I'm getting on," I thought.

So I tried to blow the flame by saying some more about Edvarda of Torpelvik: that she really was not made of stone, that she had thanked me for my visit; but Rosa was already indifferent and had left off dusting the piano; she sat down.

"Yes, fancy, I got on very well with Edvarda of Torpelvik," I said.

"Ah well, thank God for that!" replied Rosa. "There you see, you have only to go about a little—see other women——"

"Yes, you were right. And every day after that I was up in your room looking across to where she lives. Now I remember that when I left she asked me to come again."

Oh, now I watched Rosa like a beggar or a condemned man. Her whole face brightened joyfully at the prospect of getting rid of my tiresome devotion; she said:

"There you see! Oh, I can well understand your falling in love with her. She is good and kind, and

my father said she got on so well in the confirmation class. So she has talents."

"Yes," was all I said.

"Now you must go and see her often, you really must. And you can put up at the parsonage every time, they'll be pleased to have you."

Then I saved what there was to be saved and said:

"Well, well, at any rate I've had a chat with you and made you forget your own troubles for a while."

On the way home I met Hartvigsen, who had just come from Mack. He had a very preoccupied air.

"My partner's getting worse instead of better," he said. "Our ships are sailing to-morrow and I can't be in the office and everywhere else at the same time. The worst of it is that they're doing everything to upset Mack in his own house; there's a new parlourmaid come."

I had heard about the new parlourmaid; she had come to take the place of Petrine who had to be married. It was the Baroness who had got Jens Bairnsfather to provide this girl from the skerries; her name was Margrete and she was both young and good-looking, but at the same time extraordinarily steady and godfearing.

"Last night Margrete was sitting up with Mack to give him his medicine," Hartvigsen told me. "So they got talking and Margrete she thought Mack's bed was too soft, he ought to have twigs to lie on."

"Twigs?" I asked.

"Yes, did you ever hear anything so crazy?" said

Hartvigsen. "And now there was a message for me in the store, would I come up to Mack; for I'll go so far as to say that he can't get on without me. I went up to him, there's no more than half a man left of him, and 'Now I want your good advice, Hartwich,' he says to me. I can assure you, it isn't everybody that same Mack of Sirilund would say a thing like that to; but me, you see, he pretty well can't get on without. So I said to him, and it's the truth, that it was him and nobody else that helped me out of the dust once upon a time and that if he had need of my advice he should have it. Then he told me about the twigs. 'It shan't be!' I answered right away; 'the women have gone crazy!' 'Thanks,' said Mack to me; 'I wanted to hear what a sensible man would say.' But that wasn't all, he said he'd have to find some way of getting well and on his feet again. 'For as long as I'm lying here I do nothing but think,' he said, 'I can't sleep at nights, I shall end by turning religious.' "

Here Hartvigsen paused for a moment. So unnatural did such a change in Mack appear that his eyes were wide with perplexity.

"That's strange!" I said.

Hartvigsen thought a long time and said:

"Isn't there any cure on earth for a bad stomach? What the hell have we got doctors for?" And all at once he looked knowing, marvellously shrewd, he gathered all his brains and said: "We can all see that it's only destroying an active man like Mack to

be kept in bed all this time. We've got to get him up."

"But that's just the trouble, how to get him well enough."

"Ay ay," replied Hartvigsen, starting to walk. "But before I see him turn religious and lie on a bed of twigs I'll dig up his bath-tub again!"

XXV

AND late in the evening the bath-tub was restored to the light of day. It was a very strange business. The Baroness knew nothing about it, Rosa knew nothing about it, we betook ourselves to the wood in the clear rays of the moon and the northern lights and did the deed in all haste. It was the same party as at the burial, Sven Watchman, the blacksmith and the cooper, and the ground was still unfrozen so that they did not have to use picks.

"No, this would never have happened with the bath-tub if Edvarda hadn't been set on it," said Hartvigsen. "You ought never to listen to womenfolk and suchlike."

And the three men with spades agreed that womenfolk and suchlike—they were always the same. And to be sure those three men worked manfully at their task; they were not blind to what it was they were doing, they knew well enough that this terrible bed would again become a peril to all three and many more besides; but there was no help for it. At any rate it was a whole year till the next ransacking took place. And besides, it had been such a direful burden to have Mack laid up that al-

most anything was better. Even Sven Watchman seemed to derive no particular marital profit from the burial of Mack's bath-tub; in any case he was now digging away till the sweat ran off him to get it up again. As for the other two, the blacksmith said:

"If I know you for the man you are, Hartwich, you won't let us do this job for nothing."

"That'll be all right," replied Hartvigsen. "Now let me see that you're careful with the feather-bed. It's red silk."

"It's the cooper that's so careless," said the blacksmith.

"I careless?" answered the offended cooper. "I'd dig with my own hands rather than see any harm come to it."

They were all like children, working for praise and a reward.

At last the bath-tub lay free of earth and was hoisted up with ropes. The men recovered their breath and examined and felt it to see that it had suffered no damage and had not been much bent. Hartvigsen set to work with his own hands and removed the sacks that were spread over it, shook the feather-bed and the pillow and then used his handkerchief to remove all traces of mould from the silk. "As the old saying goes, there isn't a spot or a stain on it," he said, pleased with himself. Then the men filled up the grave.

It was now getting late, we went home carrying

the bath-tub among us. Hartvigsen was in great dread of the Baroness and wished audibly that they had the bath-tub well indoors. I was sent on ahead to find out if all was quiet; if I was not back in a reasonable time the others would take it as a hint to come on. That was the plan.

There was no light in the drawing-room; in the whole great building the only windows that showed a light were Mack's and the Baroness's. I walked round the house; the housekeeper and the servants had also put out their lights. Then I went in at the door and up to my own room. I was as usual a little apprehensive; but then I had looked everywhere, so my conscience was free.

A few minutes later I heard a muffled tramp at the other end of the house; there they come with the bath-tub, I thought. A moment after I heard a door open. I went out into the passage and listened; the Baroness had come out and I heard her say: "What is the meaning of this?"—"What?" answered Hartvigsen from below, and he did not sound very bold. "I ask what is the meaning of this," repeated the Baroness, and her voice was no longer a voice of velvet. Then Hartvigsen replied: "Come on, boys! What's the meaning of this? Can't you see that he's getting worse and worse? He'll die on our hands!" And as the Baroness was far too proud to start wrangling with any one on the staircase, she left the men and returned to her room.

So no doubt all went well.

In the morning the vessels had gone from the bay, they had sailed during the night. The worthy Sven Watchman, having finished his work ashore, was once more skipper of his big vessel and nothing else, and had quitted Sirilund and his wife's abode. So all was in order again.

And lo, the days that followed were full of marvels: the great soul of the place, Ferdinand Mack, slowly but surely got on his feet again. It was as though we were all witnesses of a miracle of grace, even the Baroness had to acknowledge it. But nevertheless she did not fail to intervene with her thin and powerful hand, ay, she was the most obstiate woman I have met: when her father was to take his bath again for the first time the Baroness would not entrust the work of rubbing him to any one but the new godfearing maid Margrete, so she had to do it. And Mack, we know, was a sociable man in his bath and grateful for every attention; it is a fact that Margrete came out of his room as quiet and unscandalized that evening as ever after.

But now it was Hartvigsen's turn to triumph. When Mack began to eat more and sit up again Hartvigsen took all the credit to himself. It was a treat to hear his good-natured boasts: "Red flannel was no good," he said; "and doctor and medicine no good either. Then I guessed at once what was wrong. No, it's nothing else but keeping your eyes open that does it!"

Three weeks later Mack was in the office again.

There was a good dinner that day, with wine, by order of the Baroness. I was sitting in the drawing-room when Mack came in and saw the festive preparations. "Where is my daughter the Baroness?" he asked the housekeeper. "She has gone upstairs to change her dress," was the answer. Mack walked up and down, talking to me, looking now and again at the clock on the wall. To me he was very gracious, asking how I had been all the time since he had seen me.

Then the Baroness came in and she had on a dress of red velvet; both the little girls were with her and they too were in Sunday clothes.

"Are you there, grandpapa?" said the children, surrounding him.

And Mack said a few kind words to the children. Then he turned to his daughter and said:

"I was asking for you, Edvarda, to thank you for this attention."

Not a word more, but I saw that his thanks meant a great deal to his daughter.

"How do you feel now?" she asked.

"Thank you, I'm well again."

"A little weak, perhaps?"

"No, oh no," said Mack with a shake of the head.

So we sat down to table. I thought to myself in the course of the meal that I had never seen so strange a footing of politeness between father and daughter; some mystery brooded over the house of Sirilund! And Mack found an opportunity to

thank his daughter for the new maid she had engaged for the house: she seemed a quiet and excellent maid. And Mack said this without moving a muscle, just as if none of us knew why Petrine had had to leave his service and Margrete had taken her place.

And from now on the Hookmaker regained his work and his livelihood, nay, a few weeks later he was provided with wife and child as well. The Hookmaker was no loser, Petrine was strong and capable and of cheerful disposition into the bargain, every one thought she was far too good for the wretched playboy she had got for a husband. He could turn his hand to nothing, and that is why he went about with the heels of his shoes worn right down on one side, not having it in him to clump them with iron. Heavytop, on the other hand—what a difference between these two mates!—Heavytop sat down every evening when he took his boots off and had a good look at them and treated them to a liberal dose of hot tar, and as sure as he found the smallest place for it anywhere on the sole he knocked in one more final hobnail. Those boots were pretty heavy on his feet and they lasted four years. But the Hookmaker's shoes were a scandal in his eyes.

The two mates had not so much to say to each other now; Heavytop was left more and more alone. No, the Hookmaker had many other interests now, wife and child, he was married, and had become a family man; Heavytop was left alone with the mem-

ory of Bramaputra. So what had they to talk about? Besides, there was nothing in the playboy: for a long time he went about bragging that he had had the loan of Mack's two horses and sledges for his wedding; what was that for a grown man to be always thinking of? But had Mack raised his wages? And had the newly married couple been given a decent roof over their heads?

Oh, but this last question was always in the Hookmaker's thoughts: the room was not yet his, the pauper Fredrik Mensa would not die. The Hookmaker said to Heavytop: "If I was as strong as you I'd do the corpse in!"—said this person with the pitiful hands and arms. There was nothing else to stop him, but he had not the strength! Heavytop answered: "You talk like the beasts of the field!" "We can't get along at all, we've nothing to breathe!" yelled the Hookmaker. "Ay ay," said Heavytop with sober gravity, "it's a bad thing for the child." The Hookmaker continued to rage. "Why can't Jens Bairnsfather come back to the corpse? What's to prevent him? He was there before me, but now he's been given a loft."

Heavytop was right, it was bad for the child. He was a big, fine boy with brown eyes, and he never got a breath of pure air except when he was well wrapped up and taken out of the room; all night long he lay crying with his nose stopped up and breathing Fredrik Mensa's air. But all things are wisely ordered: a child cannot have any feelings to

speak of, it will stand anything. And there was Fredrik Mensa lying in his bed, saying Tut–tut and Bobo–bobo, as though to amuse the child; the meek old man never complained of a howling baby being put into his room, so why should any one complain of him?

Weeks went by, we already noticed that the days were lengthening, little by little the blessed light returned. To confess the truth, I found these winter weeks a heavy burden and I could not have borne them without God's good help. Praise be to Him! And as I had brought my fate upon myself I could blame no one.

As before, Rosa came now and then to the store for her household shopping; she brought little Martha with her to amuse her and also to help carry things; she herself was drawing near her time.

One day Rosa said to me:

"Are you never coming to see us again?"

"Oh yes, thank you," was all I answered.

"I suppose you are so busy. Do you often go to Torpelvik?"

"No," I said.

"Oh, but you ought to!"

That was the last little talk I had with Rosa before the great event took place. We were both standing outside the counter in the store and she gave me her warm, kind hand when she left. She was in blue fox furs. How strange it all is to think of: this woman had such power over me that

when she left the store I manœuvred so as to stand exactly on the spot where she had just been standing. It seemed to bring me a little warmth and a little sweetness, it did me good to feel it. Though I had never had a taste of her breath I thought how good it was, and I guessed this from her hands and the warmth of her face, perhaps also from her nature. But no doubt it was all the result of my boundless worship. Many a time I thought in those days: if God had given me Rosa perhaps I should have made more of my life than I have done. In after years I have arrived at calmer views and have accepted my lot. *Fiat voluntas Dei!*

Everything went on as usual at Sirilund, Mack had his office and Hartvigsen looked after everything out of doors; but the Baroness was getting bored again and could not find peace in a religious life. "I'm not going to church any more; he stands there and gabbles like a child about grown-up things!" she said of the clergyman of our parish. Another day she said straight out—and it was Shrove Sunday, when she let herself go and brought the children to birch us all in bed—said she: "I'm sick of all this everlasting talk about fasting and penance and crucifixion; flog away, children!"

Yes, sooner or later Baroness Edvarda was bored with everything; now for a few days she was once more cheerful, nay, full of song and gaiety. "What's the matter with you?" she asked the steady and godfearing Margrete. "I thought I heard

you sighing, and what's the use of that?" And in fact Margrete began to drop some of her quiet ways; often and often the Baroness infected her and scattered her seriousness. Nor can she have found it easy in the long run to be deaf to Mack's crafty talk when he was in his bath; perhaps Margrete could not always be on her guard. When one evening Mack asked her to fetch Sven Watchman's wife Ellen to help at the bath, Margrete did so and her face was not a whit the less innocent. Oh, it can't have been very nice for young Margrete! And now the Baroness did not meddle any more with any of her father's wild doings. Everything was as it had been before the religious period.

But Ellen, she loved only one man in the world, and that was Mack. It was wonderful to see. Nor would she put up with any one beside herself, and now there was Margrete, what was she doing in Mack's room? Late one evening I heard a wrangle outside my window between these two women; they had fallen out just as they came from Mack's bath. Both Ellen and Margrete were excited, they did not shrink from using loud and abusive language. I knocked once on my window, but neither of them minded the student.

Ellen's voice had its hoarse, erotic sound. She said:

"Ah, you're a nice one!"

"Be quiet!" answered Margrete. "I can get along without you."

"Can you? Didn't he tell you to go and fetch me?"

"What then? Can't you behave yourself and stand still?"

"You and your godfearing ways!"

"Yes, I am godfearing, but what are you?" replied Margrete indignantly. "You don't know how to behave yourself."

"Oh," said Ellen, "your eyes were willing enough. Fie!"

Margrete shouted in exasperation:

"Did I see you spit? I'll tell him that."

"Go on. I don't mind. And can you tell me what you were doing rubbing him all over? I saw you."

"I do what I'm ordered."

Ellen mimicked her:

"Ordered! Oh, you needn't worry, I know he's hugged you once or twice already."

"Did he tell you that?"

"Yes, he did."

"I'll ask him about that."

XXVI

ONE morning Hartvigsen came hurriedly through the store, passed behind the counter and into the office. He was only away a couple of minutes. When he came out again there was as usual somebody who wanted to speak to him and ask him a question, but Hartvigsen waved his hand and said: "I haven't time to-day; I've a sick wife at home!"

I felt a sudden sharp pang and said "Ugh!"

"Oh well," said Hartvigsen with a smile, "she's better now all the same."

"Then perhaps it came last night?"

Hartvigsen answered:

"Well, it won't do to tell any lies about it. It's a boy."

Hartvigsen had been up all night, but he was proud and delighted. He gave orders to Steen the store clerk not to refuse the two poor women what they were asking for and went out again as fast as he had come. His business had been simply and solely to tell Mack the news. That same Mack, one might suspect and hate him, but he was a great man!

The news spread; the little girls were already

begging to be allowed to go to Rosa and see the marvel; Mack had the flag hoisted both at the house and on the quay. It is true that the birth of a child was no rare event at Sirilund; but Mack found it by no means seemly to run up the flag every time. Now it was another affair. And to be sure this great attention had its good effect upon Hartvigsen: "You can say what you like about my partner," he said; "but he's well up in what concerns good breeding and all that."

The Baroness too showed that she had a heart for others besides herself: she went daily to Rosa's house and was very attentive to her old friend. And finally she took the little girls with her.

Rosa was already up and out again; I heard that the young mother was well and cheerful, beaming over the child and altogether lighter of heart; ah, the little fellow she had been given turned out a great blessing to her. I determined not to go for the sole purpose of congratulating her, but to wait until I met her accidentally.

And so it came about one day that I met her on a great and significant occasion.

The spring equinox had come, with stormy weather, heavy seas and dark nights. One night I heard the mail-boat bellowing again off Sirilund; God have mercy on us all, I said, and bring all seafaring men safe to land!

In the morning the weather had cleared; I put on my greatcoat and took the road down to the quay.

On the way I overtook Rosa; I knew her at a distance by her blue fox cloak.

I hardly had time to greet her and before I could utter my congratulations she exclaimed:

"Have you seen Benoni?"

"No."

She was in despair about something and her lips were quivering. She said:

"Gilbert the Lapp has been to see me again. He said that—and I daren't stay at home, I've left the child with our old servant. I'm out looking for Benoni."

"Calm yourself. What did Gilbert the Lapp say?"

"He said that now he has come. Yes, by the mail-boat last night. Nikolai. Now he has come and he is not dead. He's at the blacksmith's. Can't you go on ahead and see if Benoni is on the quay?"

I ran off instantly. Hartvigsen was nowhere on the quay. A man joined me in the search, a stranger to me, but he addressed the cooper as an acquaintance; he began by asking me who I was looking for. The man was well dressed and had the air of an educated person; I answered that I was looking for Hartvigsen, that his wife wanted him, she was waiting on the road. At that the man bestirred himself and joined me in running after Hartvigsen. "I'll help you to look for him," said the man; "I know him."

So we both ran back to Rosa.

She caught sight of us at a distance and seemed to give a start and threw out both her arms. But I understood nothing, I was not thinking or noticing. Then she turned, trying to avoid us. I thought: she sees that I haven't found Hartvigsen and now she is terribly anxious. But there was no cause for despair, perhaps Hartvigsen was at the mill, it would take a quarter of an hour to fetch him. Rosa continued to move away, a few paces ahead of us, and it was pitiful to see her, she was positively like an animal in blue fox fur crouching and shambling away from us. When we came nearer we heard her sobbing, it sounded like the animal baying. It hurts me to tell it. Then she swayed off the road, into the deep snow and away to a stone which the wind had swept bare.

When we came up to her I saw how strange was the look on her face, how grey it was and quivering; she gasped for breath.

"Don't be afraid, Rosa," suddenly the man said to her. "We're looking for Benoni. Of course he's at the mill."

In a flash I realized that the man was Nikolai Arentsen himself, that deplorable person whom God had brought safely to land last night. And now in my thoughtlessness I had brought him face to face with Rosa.

I was paralyzed and could do nothing. The man did nothing either, but took off his fur cap to cool

himself and said a few words as he did so. He was perfectly bald.

"I assure you Benoni is at the mill," he said. "He's no farther away than that."

Rosa stared at him and said in a quaking voice:

"What do you want here?"

"Puh! it's warm running about," said the man, putting on his cap again. "What do I want here? I have one or two things to do. I have also a little old mother here."

I stepped up to Rosa, took her by the arm and asked her to come away with me: "Don't sit here on this frozen stone," I said.

She did not get up, but answered listlessly:

"It's all the same."

"Yes, I came last night by the mail-boat," the man went on. "Vile weather, squalls. I put up at the blacksmith's. We sat playing an innocent game of cards till morning."

I did not want to hear any more and as I could not get Rosa away I was about to leave her to look for Hartvigsen.

"Don't go!" she said.

The man looked at me too and said, as though to oblige her:

"No, don't go. We can find Hartvigsen any time."

At that moment two thoughts came into my head: Rosa had called me a child and there was no harm in a child being present when two grown people had

something to say to each other. Did she want to slight me again?

"No, why should I stay here?" I said.

"Why, because—stay here!" she replied.

Then came my second thought: she feels safer with me here. She has not been able to avoid this meeting and she wants to get it over at once. So I stayed.

"This is Nikolai," she said to me.

"Nikolai Arentsen," said the man. "Sometime Attorney. In my time I was the half of a little omnipotence hereabouts. I was Nikolai Arentsen, the Law. Now I am the Gospel."

As all these words were addressed to me I asked in return:

"What Gospel do you bring?"

"Well, I'll tell you, Rosa," he replied, ignoring me completely; "I think we ought to jump into the sea, both of us."

"Perhaps that will be best," she said.

Pause.

I looked at him: a man in the thirties, of rather ordinary appearance, round and short in the neck, with a handsome mouth.

"No, why should it be best?" he suddenly asked. "You have a husband and child, a long life before you. No, Rosa."

To this she replied:

"You haven't changed, I see."

I thought: why in the world does she sit here and

carry on this conversation? Why doesn't she get up and go?

Then he said, short and sharp:

"Listen to me, Rosa, what did I say? Didn't I say it was this very Post Benoni and not I who ought to be your husband? Any calf could see that."

"You don't say anything to my having married?"

"No. That is in order."

"Is it in order?" she asked, with a first sign of interest. "They told me you were dead; that was what made me do it."

"Oh yes, it's in order. That is to say, I'm hanged if it's in order; but I've come to put it in order. Dead? Of course I'm dead. That's what I was to be paid for. But I don't get my payment, not all of it, the good gentlemen have swindled me. So I've turned up again alive."

She must have been used to his immense cynicism, but in spite of that a shudder went through her and he saw it.

"Ah yes!" he sneered, "you are struck with dismay and so forth. But I only intend to live until I get paid, then I shall die again. You can thank the swindlers for my being here. I gave them two warnings, so why couldn't they spare you this visit from the grave? I sent two signs of life to my mother; but the swindlers didn't kill me."

Rosa had grown calmer, she clasped her hands and said:

"Oh, how terrible it all is!"

"Yes, I am terrible, I haven't changed. But would you have thought that of the gentlemen? Don't misunderstand me though: I don't suspect your husband so much as his agent."

"Who is that? I don't understand——"

"It's Mack."

There was something appealing and straightforward about the man, if only his brutal candour had been employed in a better cause. I wished to help Rosa in putting an end to the scene and said:

"Excuse me, can't you ask him why he lets you into all these details about his bargain?"

"I'll tell you that too," he replied to Rosa. "Your marriage with Benoni is in perfect legal order, I have nothing to gain there. Your well deserved contempt I have enjoyed for many years, so that in order to bear the memory of me at all you have had to go back to recollections of our young days and how I was then. But now it happens that I need that payment I was to have had, I have a certain use for it. So I thought: Perhaps Rosa will help me to get it."

"What you said about old recollections is perfectly true," said Rosa, replying to her own thoughts. And perhaps she would have said more, but he interrupted her:

"Oh yes. You have said that before, I know all about it. And if you care to refresh yourself with these old recollections, I don't mind. What you would really like would be to see me come before

you as a man you could be a little pathetic about and feel a little pity for. You'd like me to squeeze out a tear for what I have lost in you. Wouldn't it do you good if I played up to your sentimentality and gave way at the knees and fell with my face on your shoes?"

Never shall I forget the respect I felt for this wastrel's sheer and dogged cynicism. He helped her to her feet, she got up quickly with a frown of anger and offence.

"I won't talk to you!" she said.

"Not even if I allude to your glowing copper smile?" he asked imperturbably.

"No," she replied and sat down again, digging the point of her shoe into the snow time after time. I had never seen her so offended.

"Go home to your child," said Nikolai Arentsen all at once, like a strong man and a man of sense. "We two have done with each other."

"Yes," she agreed, "God knows we have!"

"Only I haven't been paid."

"You will be, I'm sure. I will speak to Benoni."

"Thanks."

"For it must be only a mistake. I'm sure it's not Benoni's fault."

"Right. Then what are you sitting here in the snow for? My business is done."

Pause.

"I don't quite know," she replied. "Perhaps I'm waiting to see a trace of shame in you."

"In vain, Rosa!"

"Did you say you hadn't been paid for me?"

"H'm. You want to continue," he replied, straightening himself. "We two have done with each other, but now comes the farewell, I suppose?"

Rosa shook her head and said:

"Oh, I think it's too bad of you."

"And so forth. No, my friend, it isn't that exactly. But your heart hasn't had enough, that's what it is. And how will you manage to squeeze out a little tear of remembrance over me when you get home?"

"No, no, I shall shed no tears at all."

"But that is exactly what you're longing to do."

Oh, there was no doubt that each fresh sally went home. At last she got up, rejoined the road and began to walk towards home. We followed.

"Try to find Benoni for me," she said to me.

At her turning her steps involuntarily slackened. Arentsen took off his cap and said:

"Well, thanks, then you'll speak to your husband?"

Rosa nodded without looking at him.

"Good-bye," said Arentsen and put on his cap again. "What are you waiting for?"

"Be quiet!" she exclaimed impetuously. "I've never heard such a thing! What am I waiting for? I only want to ask you," she said to me—"I expect you'll find Benoni at the mill."

I nodded to this and Arentsen interposed again:

"Yes, we know that. I for my part saw him go there. But what you're waiting for is the last word. I wonder what it's going to be. Should I say something like this—you're part-owner of the store now, you can give me credit for a bottle or two at the spirit counter, can't you?"

Rosa turned without a word and went straight back to her house.

We two men walked on together. Neither said anything. I was thinking how needlessly harsh this man had been both to himself and to Rosa; if it was to help her that he had behaved in this way, he was no mean person, no indeed he was not.

We walked past Sirilund and came to the turning by the blacksmith's cottage. Here Arentsen said:

"So you'll look for Benoni? When you find him I'm staying here at the blacksmith's, if he wants me."

I went on to the mill, found Hartvigsen and told him everything. Hartvigsen was speechless for a long time; then he said:

"It's our friend Mack who's been at his old doings; he said he'd manage the whole thing. Can't you come along with me to the blacksmith's?"

I excused myself, but when Hartvigsen said: "I must confess I feel bad about meeting him," I went with him.

We came to the blacksmith's cottage; Arentsen must have seen us from the window, he stood on the door-step waiting. The two men nodded to each

other. I said: "Well, here is Hartvigsen," and then moved a little way from them. They talked for some minutes, mentioned sums of money and seemed both equally surprised. "That and no more is what I got," said Arentsen with emphasis. Hartvigsen gave him his hand at parting. "Now I must get hold of Mack," said Hartvigsen to me.

We went to the store and Hartvigsen stepped into the office while I waited outside. He was gone a quarter of an hour and then we walked along the road to his home. Hartvigsen said:

"That Mack's a terror! He's been imposing on my wife and me that Nikolai was dead."

"What did he say now?" I asked.

"What did he say? He answered me and said: 'Yes, to Rosa and to you and to everybody else he's dead.' That's what he answered me. No, he's so wily there isn't any one like him."

"What did he say about the money?"

"Ah, don't you think he had an answer to that? I'm ashamed to tell you the hugeness of the amount, but Mack fooled a big sum out of me. And he promised Nikolai a much smaller sum, several thousand dollars less. 'What's the meaning of this?' I asked Mack. 'Oh,' he said, 'it means that I was only acting as broker.' That's the answer he gave me. He said: 'I undertake to arrange Rosa's divorce for a certain sum; but it doesn't concern you, Hartwich, what I get Nikolai to do it for.' That's the talk he gave me. Did you ever hear the like of

it for villainy? But that's the thanks I get for digging up his bath-tub and for my kindness in helping him to start his profligate life again."

"And so he hasn't even paid Arentsen what he promised him?"

"No. Only the half. He's cheated the poor devil out of the other half. 'What did you do that for?' I asked Mack. 'I haven't cheated him at all,' he answered; 'I never promised him the whole amount at once, he'll have to wait; I want the money for our business,' he answered. No, it's no good talking to him, he has an answer to everything."

Hartvigsen stopped at his turning.

"Now go along to your wife," said I; "she's been waiting a long time."

"Ah, poor Rosa!" replied Hartvigsen, looking down at the house. "So she's been looking for me all day? And left the child at home! But it's a sight the way that Nikolai has made a man of himself, you wouldn't know him again. And I've made up my mind that sooner than let the poor fellow wait any longer for his money I'll pay him over again in full. I promised him that. And it shall be done this very day."

XXVII

I HAD no peace indoors or out, I wandered about all day and saw Hartvigsen call once more at the blacksmith's house. That is to give Arentsen the money, I thought. In the afternoon of the next day I walked down to the quays again, thinking I might hear a little more if I went past Rosa's house. But I heard nothing; Rosa stood at the window with the child on her arm, she looked happy and free from care and she held up the child to me; I waved my cap and thought: Thank God, then nothing bad has happened to her. I continued my way to the waterside.

Hartvigsen stood on the long quay in conversation with the blacksmith; the cooper and a couple of the wharf hands were also on the quay at some kind of work, so there were five men present besides myself. Hartvigsen was talking to the blacksmith about his lodger, he was greatly taken up with Nikolai Arentsen and had formed the best impression of him.

"I was just talking to the blacksmith about the man that's come to his house," said Hartvigsen to me. "I took him some money yesterday, he thanked me and had a good laugh. Well, you see, I didn't

owe him anything, it was Mack that owed him the money, not me. But that's all one. I don't reckon a bit of money more or less. Is he at home at your place now?"

"He's gone to see his mother," said the blacksmith.

Hartvigsen went on about Arentsen:

"And when I left yesterday he didn't forget to wish me luck with the child that I've got. He's a wonder of a man."

"Ay, you may well say that," replied the blacksmith.

That worthy man Hartvigsen, he was so pleased and surprised that Arentsen laid no claim to Rosa that his heart ran away with him altogether.

"He's a great scholar as concerns all manner of learning," said he.

And the blacksmith replied as before, wagging his head: "Faith, you may well say that."

Then Hartvigsen said:

"I'd be glad to have him for tutor in my house."

Both the blacksmith and I received this in silence and Hartvigsen looked from one of us to the other.

"He shouldn't want for wages from my hand or food under my roof either."

"No, he'd be snug enough there," said the blacksmith. "Have you said anything to him about it?"

"Not yet."

"I'm sure you'd better not either," said I.

"Oh, do you think so? Well, I don't know.

But I might have got a worse man, I can see that much now. He's a person that's well up in every kind of book-learning you can think of."

"Talk to your wife about it," said I.

"I talked to her this morning," replied Hartvigsen. "But my wife wouldn't hear of it. She says she won't have him in the house. Now that's only her exaggeration. But, you see, ladies and that sort they have such queer fancies; it's only me she thinks about."

Suddenly Nikolai Arentsen himself came strolling down the road to the quay. We all greeted him when he came near, and Arentsen replied. There was nothing unusual to be seen in him.

"Do you want a lesson in suicide, boys?" he said.

We did not answer at once; but the blacksmith, who knew him best, seemed to take it for a joke and answered:

"Suicide? Ay, that mightn't be a bad thing to learn."

Then Arentsen took a short run and jumped off the quay.

"Eh but—!" we said, looking at each other and at the sea.

The bay had not been really frozen over all the winter, there was only a thin sheet of ice, through which the heavy man plunged and vanished in an instant. Some of us thought he meant to bathe; but it was not the weather or the time of year for that. The blacksmith saw that it was a tragedy and started

to run down the steps to the boat. The rest of us had not quite realized what had happened, when Hartvigsen called to the cooper to go out with him in the other boat.

So we dragged in two boats, practised hands and stout gear, one hour, two hours—in vain! There was deep water right in to the quay and perhaps a current on the bottom; Arentsen must have been swept farther and farther out into the channel, where there was twenty fathoms. When darkness came we had to give up the dragging.

"I guessed as much!" said the blacksmith on the way home. "He gave me such a lot of queer talk this time. I asked him what he was going to take to now. "I'm not going to take to anything,' he said, 'I'm finished a long time ago,' he said. 'Well, but you've got a lot of money now,' said I. 'That's Mother's money,' he said. And just before dinner to-day he said to me: 'I want you to go down to the quay in an hour's time.' 'All right,' I said, 'I'll do that.' And then he put on his cap and went to his mother's."

We all dropped into silence. Hartvigsen came to his turning and parted from us; the blacksmith and I went on together.

I was thinking of Nikolai Arentsen and asked:

"What else did he say when you sat talking with him? What did he say yesterday after he had met Rosa?"

"He didn't say anything about that. He didn't

care about Rosa. They both lodged in my house when they were married. No, all he said was that 'Now I've met Rosa, and now I've caressed her a little with a curry-comb,' he said. He was always so pleasant and neat in his talk. 'And now I feel all the satisfaction a man can feel when he's done a real good stroke of villainy,' he said. That's all he had to say about that. But anyway he made a decent provision for his mother before he quitted this world."

A couple of weeks went by and life had settled down into its ordinary course. I knew now in my own mind that when spring came I should join Friar Vendt and go on a ramble with him. Perhaps I should have carried out my intention earlier but that the Baroness persuaded me to stay and got the little girls to back her up. So one day went by after another.

Never did any message come for me from Rosa. And yet she had let me into many of her secrets and I had been more than a witness of the recent events; but she felt no need to confide in me any more.

Rosa was very flourishing, healthy and cheerful to look at; since Nikolai Arentsen's disappearance she had no more sorrows in her life. She was everything to her child and to her husband. So perhaps all had turned out for the best.

Hartvigsen too seemed to share in a hitherto un-

known satisfaction with everything, he no longer complained that Rosa was always scared of one thing and another; on the contrary, he was always singing her praises for her kindness to him and laughing at her everlasting reminders to put on plenty of warm clothes. And the child, that rare and radiant boy in his little shirt, was always in his thoughts.

One day Hartvigsen said:

"You needn't be alarmed if you hear a piece of news one of these days."

"What sort of news may that be?" I enquired.

"Well, it won't be bad news anyway. I've taken a crazy notion into my head that I'll get up a little affair or event, as they call it. I say no more!" But as I did not show sufficient curiosity Hartvigsen pursued: "And I'm going to do it to liven us both up a bit, my wife and me. Besides, there's the child to be christened."

"A banquet!" I guessed.

"It's no use you trying to puzzle over it," said Hartvigsen, laughing so that his big yellow teeth shone good-naturedly. "For I'll bet you can't guess what it is."

That night I got out of bed again and took my old futile walk down to the quays. There was a night-light burning in Rosa's room, that must have been for the baby. All was quiet. "Good night!" I said; "God grant she may send for me to-morrow."

And in the morning I had indeed no message, but Hartvigsen came to the store and when I saw that I followed. Perhaps he has a message, I thought. Hartvigsen began as he had done the day before and dropped further obscure hints about what he intended to do one of these days. Then I asked:

"All's well at home, I hope?"

"Thank you for asking," he replied. "You haven't seen the baby yet, and why's that? My wife's talking about it."

So I went to Rosa. It is to see the child I am going, I said to myself. It was no long visit; alas, no! a short visit and final certainty.

Rosa was brisk and well, there was no trace of melancholy in her. She said she could not make out where I had been all this time; was it the child that scared me away? "Come along, you shall see the boy straightaway!"

I went upstairs with her. There sat the old maid and Martha. As they offered to go Rosa said: "No, sit still, we've only come to see the Prince."

The Prince was asleep. He was something of a Prince, big and fine, in a white hood; now and then he curled up his fingers a little. Rosa looked at him the whole time, put her head on one side and looked at him. I said a few words which I thought were suitable to the occasion and took the baby's hand a moment.

Then we went down again.

"Well, now you must be happy," I said.

"Yes, now I am happy."

A slight shadow passed over my soul, not of envy, but of resentment at Rosa's being simply happy. I knew in myself that I wished her nothing but good, but at the same time I wished her to feel sympathy for others. Oh, I suppose I sat there getting hurt at her happiness.

"Then perhaps you've been at Torpelvik, as we haven't seen you?" she asked with a laugh.

"No," I said curtly.

When she saw I was offended she turned serious at once and tried to talk it off:

"I only wanted to ask after the old people at the parsonage. But I'm sure they're quite well. And now Father is to christen the Prince."

"What are you going to call him?" I forced myself to ask.

"It's not decided yet," she replied. "My husband wants him to be called Ferdinand after Mack; but I don't know."

I remarked that she said "my husband"; before she had always called him Benoni, in fact, she had regarded Arentsen more as her husband. Well, was it envy or malice on my part? I wished to remind her of Arentsen and of the catastrophe, and said:

"And now you really must not be afraid of Gilbert the Lapp any more."

"No," she replied with a shake of the head; "I don't worry about him any more."

OHIO UNIVERSITY
LIBRARY

"And you must not fret over the accident, the catastrophe."

"What cat—Oh! No, I won't think about that. It is just as though it had happened long ago, many years ago."

Then I said:

"Of course it is worth remembering though."

"I don't know," she replied. "It seems so far away. No, it was all over, you heard yourself all that he said. I am only glad there was an end to it. Oh yes, I know it was far too sad an end, but . . . Now all I have to do is my duty to myself and those belonging to me."

Nothing more! I thought. But here was I, and what was I to do with myself? Smaller and smaller I grew, closer and closer did my thoughts contract about this one woman. Why did I not get up and go? A dreadful hopelessness made me forget everything, I heard that I said something and that Rosa asked: "What?" Ah, there was no bitter, strong pride left in me, my contemptibleness was a state of mind, but I made of it a profession, nay, a livelihood; I was grown like Jens Bairnsfather when he begged for bones.

"I stood outside here and saw a light in your window last night," I said.

Would not that have any effect? Thank me, can't you? smile and show a watery eye!

Rosa puckered her nose.

"I suppose it was for the child you had the light. Is he restless at night?" I went on, yielding ground.

"No, oh no," Rosa answered at once. "He only has to be fed and then he goes to sleep again."

Now I might have got up. That is what Friar Vendt would have done, that is what Nikolai Arentsen would have done.

"Well, well, well, well, well!" I sighed, and I carried my eyes up the wall to the ceiling, affecting indifference. "I really don't know what I shall do this spring, whether I shall join Friar Vendt."

"Oh, then you're not going to stay at Sirilund?" she asked.

"Well, I don't know. The best thing would be to lie in twenty fathoms of water."

"Now you're not to give way to despair!" said Rosa in a friendly, coaxing tone. "Poor fellow, it's so hard for you, but . . ." Suddenly I saw that she was listening, there was a sound of footsteps overhead. "There, I believe the Prince is awake!" she said, getting up.

Then at last I rose too and put out my hand.

"If you meet my husband tell him not to forget what I asked him to do," said Rosa to me in the passage.

I was wild with exasperation and answered:

"That's if I remember to tell him. But I'll try."

"Oh, I see," said Rosa gently and went upstairs.

On the way home I promised myself never to set

foot in Rosa's house until the last time. I met Hartvigsen and gave him the message.

"Of course I haven't forgot the very thing I went about," said Hartvigsen. "My wife's been asking me for several days past to settle up with the store and with Mack and everybody, so we know where we are. That's quite right of her. For now, you see, the child's come and we've got to think of others besides ourselves. And now I've settled it all up down to the last reel of cotton. It was the kind of sum that would make most folks flop into a chair speechless. I can say as much as that!"

Hartvigsen seemed to have been seriously reflecting; it may have been Rosa's doing and perhaps from now on she would guide him with her gentle good sense. I heard afterwards from Steen the store clerk that Hartvigsen had had a monstrous private account at the store and at the warehouse, but that he had now settled it. Nobody could have anything but a good word for Hartvigsen's charity to people in distress, but he could not keep it up for ever with his: "Put it down to B. Hartwich!"

He was a child. Here he stood on the road after settling this big account and his only thought was that I, a stranger who had no concern in the matter, must be made to understand his power.

"As I was saying," he said, "when other folks flop down I have to try and keep on my feet.

There's nothing else for it!" And again he began to hint at what he intended to do one of these days: "It's going to be a grand set-out altogether," he said; "and it'll cost a pretty sight of money too."

And Hartvigsen nodded and went off laughing.

XXVIII

IT is close upon Easter; a couple of boats have made a trip home from Lofoten with fish for the crews' families all over the district. The fishing has been good and people look forward to the future with confidence.

To-day, the 16th of April, it is a year since I came to this place. I have kept to my little room and meditated a great deal and looked back upon my life. When the sun came out about midday I had a fancy to paint a picture of all I could see from my window: first some fields, then a bit of the mill, and lastly the mountains behind the mill, all in snow and sunshine. So now I shall have this picture to work at during Easter, when time will be heavy on my hands. But it is hard on the eyes.

The little girls have begged their mother to let them have a yellow silk handkerchief on Easter morning to see whether the sun will dance with joy at the resurrection of Jesus. That is what the sun did in Finland. And the little girls have promised to bring the handkerchief and let me look. It is extraordinary with these children, we have never had a quarrel except once in the summer when they spoiled some flowers that I had picked for some-

one else. Afterwards it occurred to me that perhaps it was a good thing the flowers were spoilt so that I could not give them away, God knows. And ever since then the children and I have been good friends. They deserted me now and again in the autumn and preferred to walk with Jens Bairnsfather; but they soon came back to me and this winter I have been out with them many a time bobsleighing and skiing. They often come into my room and always knock at the door; if occasionally they forget to knock, they hurry out again and do so. They give me nothing but pleasure. And I make what return I can; they are always coming at inconvenient times and demanding a fairy-tale lesson, and I never refuse it; only I ask them to wait a little when I am painting at my picture.

When Easter was over Hartvigsen sailed to Lofoten in one of the fishing boats. No doubt he wanted to have an eye on his two skippers who lay there buying fish. For Hartvigsen has a big business.

Four days later he came home again; oh, he was bigger and more puffed up than ever: he had chartered a steamboat, a real ship. He himself stood on the bridge as pilot by the captain's side and gave directions to the man at the helm. This happened in the very middle of the day; we all went down to the quay to look at the ship. Then we heard Hartvigsen sing out: "Let go!" and the anchor rattled out.

So this was the great event he had been darkly hinting at for so long: the wealthy Hartwich of Sirilund had chartered a steamer to bring him home from Lofoten. He was still standing on the bridge, pretending not to see us ashore; but I believe he saw us well enough and swelled with joy at the sight. Then he came ashore and had the captain of the ship with him. We saluted; Hartvigsen was like a boy in his pride and glee. And so the two passed by.

But Hartvigsen had other use for the big ship besides the little trip home from Lofoten: she was to take his child to the christening. This was the real event, all else was trifling beside it. The child was to be christened by Rosa's father, Pastor Barfod of the neighbouring parish, which was several hours distant. So no doubt Hartvigsen's idea was to delight Rosa with this unparalleled steamboat voyage.

About midday Hartvigsen came to Sirilund and, as he had to speak to the Baroness as well as to Mack, he came into the drawing-room. He had come to get his partner and his daughter to be godfather and godmother. Oh, that same Mack, one might hate him like poison, but still he was the great and mighty lord of all! Mack at once said thank you, he would be honoured, and the Baroness made the same reply.

"What is he going to be called?" she asked.

But to this Hartvigsen answered rather awkwardly:

"We haven't decided. But my wife will find a name for her Prince. She calls him the Prince."

The fact was that Hartvigsen had wished to call his boy Ferdinand after Mack. But Petrine, erstwhile parlourmaid, who was now married to the Hookmaker, forestalled him; she watched her chance at Easter and christened her boy Ferdinand for the best of reasons. Those who were surprised that Mack had not stopped her forgot what sort of man he was: "By all means!" had been Mack's reply.

Before leaving, Hartvigsen invited me to join the party on board next day and at the dinner at his father-in-law's afterwards; but I thanked him and replied, as I had done once before, that I had no clothes for so great an occasion.

"He has no dress-coat. He'd rather die than go without a dress-coat on," said the Baroness, laughing.

"That is how I was brought up in my good home," I answered.

Mack nodded and supported me. And I cared more for that nod and the couple of words Mack said than for the Baroness's laughter. And indeed she said a moment later: "Of course you are right!"

Great preparations for the trip were going on

at Hartvigsen's and at Sirilund. The Baroness was taking her little girls with her and they went pink with joy at the thought; little Martha was also to be taken, and her father, Steen the store clerk, was very proud of it. Hartvigsen was putting all sorts of things on board, wine and dainties, as his contribution to the feast.

So the ship steamed away.

In two days she returned and brought all our people back again. All had gone well, the boy was named Augustus after Rosa's father. The ship lay waiting in the bay till next day; I was on board, Hartvigsen was inspecting her everywhere and saying: "Ay ay, I dare say the end of it will be that I'll buy her one of these days." But when the ship had sailed Lightkeeper Schöning came into the store one day and asked: "What was that little steam-launch that called here a couple of times?" "She took Hartvigsen's child to be christened," I said. The Lightkeeper smiled in his withered way and said: "Oh, what a lot of trouble that man takes to get rid of his little bit of money!" "I dare say Hartvigsen will buy the ship," I said. Then the Lightkeeper shook his head and answered: "No, he'd better keep his money to buy porridge."

And in fact Hartvigsen seemed to have given up playing the rich fool with his money. He bragged hugely of the great event he had arranged, but he no longer kept his account at the store open to all the world. One day I heard him say to a woman

who was asking for some articles: "Coffee and that and likewise dress materials you'll have to go and see my wife about." It was no business of mine, but I felt a little thrill of joy on hearing him say this. He was undoubtedly still a very rich man and Rosa was evidently trying to break him of committing follies with his wealth. So it appeared.

Oh, everything was now going on very well.

The only exception was the unhappy Baroness Edvarda. In her efforts to kill time she was again trying to upset Hartvigsen. One did not know whether to laugh or to weep over it. She hunted him up on the quay or at the mill, she met him on the road and joined him; but Hartvigsen seemed to have had enough of her overstrained talk, he said good-bye as soon as he could and left her. This went on for a while, the winter was wearing to an end, and the Baroness got worse instead of better in her attempts to upset Hartvigsen. But nothing moved him now, such was the beneficent power Rosa had acquired over him.

"Write for Friar Vendt to come back," the Baroness said to me.

"I am going to join Vendt myself before long," I replied.

"Oh, so you want to leave us!" was all she said.

And she went off again to meet Hartvigsen.

In her selfish obstinacy she could not bear the way Rosa had tied him down; it made her adopt a more natural tone with him and she now spoke

in a way he could understand. But Hartvigsen was filled with virtuous steadfastness. Of Rosa the Baroness remarked: "How stodgy and domesticated she's got with that husband and child of hers!"

No, at times this remarkable lady was anything but well-bred in her manners, considering she was a Baroness.

What a contrast between her and her father. Never was this man known to make a slip or lose his self-possession. There was old Malene, for instance, Nikolai Arentsen's mother, she came to see Mack on important business. Malene brought all the pile of banknotes her son had given her wrapped in a cloth which she held tightly with both hands: now Mack was to take care of the money for her. Mack replied without turning a hair: "Yes, that's right: you will deposit your money with me and then you can take it out in goods as you require them." He entered the amount in a book and nodded to Malene. "It's been keeping me awake of nights," said she. "But now it won't keep you awake any longer," replied Mack. When Hartvigsen heard of the affair he clapped his hands together and said: "Did you ever? Now he's going to get manured the third time over with this same money!"

One day the Baroness asked me to go up with her to Fredrik Mensa's little room. "It's too bad the way they leave him," she said; "now I really must tidy him up a little." At first I could not

guess why she chose me in particular to accompany her; but I thought perhaps the Baroness had turned religious again and wanted to do a good deed, so I went with her.

There lay the old pauper all by himself in the little room; Petrine had gone out with her child. The atmosphere was horribly thick, the walls and the floor were in a shameful state of filth; the Baroness opened a window so that we were able to breathe. Then she twisted a sheet of paper into a cornet, remarking as she did so: "I shouldn't be a storekeeper's daughter if I didn't know how to make a cornet." To this the ancient replied on hearing a strange voice: "Whoa, whoa!" evidently thinking we were horses. Then the Baroness went over him, collecting vermin which she put into the cornet.

This made me reflect: how strangely this lady is compounded of good and evil; she does not count herself too good for a repulsive piece of work at which her servants would shudder! And I helped her to pick lice. The Baroness scratched the ancient a little and he tried to help her, scrabbling in the air with his fingers.

"Now hold the cornet," she said to me.

Then she took a comb and began to empty the ancient's hair. Oh, it was shocking work and had to be done with great caution; the worst of it was that the ancient would not keep still. Poor Fredrik Mensa had been left to himself and had no-

body to scratch him, and now God had sent him this delicious hour. He began to lick his lips and grin with delight: "Tut–tut!" he said. The Baroness conscientiously collected all the vermin in the cornet; oh, nobody could have done it more neatly!

"Have we nearly got enough?" she asked, looking into it. "Oh yes, that's enough."

"Enough?" I queried.

"I only meant . . ."

And all at once she started to give Fredrik Mensa a good combing, over and over again, without clearing the comb, going at it vigorously and with a will; I stood by and picked up what I could all over the pillow. The ancient enjoyed it so much that he roared with laughter and flung out his arms with the intoxication of it: "Tut–tut–tut–tut–tut!" he said, nodding his head and laughing again. But all at once the joy vanished from his face and he yelled: *"Sattan!"*

"That must have hurt him," I said.

"Not at all!" answered the Baroness and went on with her work.

Then Fredrik Mensa took to spitting till the wall was dripping and uttered a string of oaths. It was most unpleasant. I could not contain myself any longer and said again: "I'm sure it's hurting him!"

Then the Baroness stopped. She took the cornet from my hand, closed it securely and shut the win-

dow. When we went out she got hold of Jens Bairnsfather and the dairymaid and gave them both orders that Fredrik Mensa's room was to be properly cleaned out. After that she found Petrine and said: "You will have to keep Fredrik Mensa tidy if you want to stay in the room." "I've been trying ever so long," said Petrine, beginning to cry. "It's an impossibility to keep him clean, he's so careless in his ways and he gets into a mess with his food all day long. If only God would take him to Himself! Yesterday we put him on a clean shirt and to-day he's not fit to be seen again." "You must get some linen from the store," said the Baroness, "and make him several shirts; you must wash and comb him every day and give him clean clothes as often as he needs them. Remember that," she said, and nodded.

There was no mistaking the Baroness, any more than her father. Unfortunately, from what happened afterwards, I had reason to suspect the Baroness and the cornet she had filled with vermin; but I appreciated the fact that she had shown confidence in me and had never thought of enjoining silence; I therefore remained dumb.

A couple of days later the Baroness and I were talking in the yard and Hartvigsen came past.

"How have you found it here?" he said. "We're almost driven out of house and home."

"Oh?"

"By reason of a regular plague of vermin and

lice," said Hartvigsen. "We must have got them on the steamboat trip. I've made up my mind once for all that I won't have anything more to do with that ship."

"We didn't catch any vermin," said the Baroness.

"Oh, you didn't?" said he. "Well, it don't worry me so much, but my wife she's washing upstairs and down and it makes her cry."

The Baroness took Hartvigsen by the arm and led him across the yard. I did not know what to think or believe, but I heard the Baroness say: "What, isn't Rosa enough of a housewife to keep the place clear of vermin!" The two strolled about for a good while, but it ended as usual in Hartvigsen saying good-bye and going home.

Poor misguided Baroness Edvarda!

XXIX

SPRING is coming on, the snow is beginning to thaw in the fields and out on the drying-rocks, and crows and magpies are thinking of building. So I have not much longer to stay at Sirilund.

The Baroness came into my room to-day and threw herself into a chair. Her eyes were dazed and her whole face looked grey.

"What has happened?" I asked.

"Now he is dead," she answered. "I knew it. Nothing has happened."

"Who is dead?"

"Glahn. In India. It's in the paper. His family announce it. In India, it says."

She stammered in her speech and then bit her lip. I felt pity for her and said:

"That is sad news. May it not be a mistake, a confusion?"

"No," she said.

And once more she bled at the lips, she sputtered blood again and I had to agree with what Friar Vendt had said about her mouth flowering.

A moment later she rose from her chair and left my room. She could find no peace; she was also

in the office with her father. In the afternoon she went to bed, and when she had lain there an hour she sent for me.

"Nothing has happened," she said as I came in. "I knew he was dead. Now it says that he died in India. Well, well, it's all one."

"It occurs to me that it might be a mistake of identity—" I began, trying to console her.

"Oh no!" she said curtly. "What I wanted to say was—excuse me for coming into your room so abruptly this morning and for sending for you now. A mistake, you say? What sort of a mistake?"

"A piece of news like that has travelled all the way from India," I replied. "A mistake in the name is not impossible."

"Do you think that?" she said. "Perhaps!"

But I am sure she had given up hope. She stayed in bed for a few days and when she got up again it was some time before she recovered. She had got into the habit of clasping her sides with both hands, and she had fallen off so much that her long fingers almost met, indeed her waist had grown as slender as an hour-glass. But she came of good stock and recovered by degrees; when the fishermen began to return from Lofoten there was no change to be seen in her except that she was wilder and more self-willed than ever before. It was as though she would defy heaven and earth over Glahn's fate. How hard she was on herself!

The boats came home and lay off the drying-

grounds, once more there was life and song and traffic in the bay. And the latest north-going mail-boat brought the everlasting Englishman, Sir Hugh Trevelyan, back to the country. He was extremely drunk as usual and again put in an appearance on the drying-rocks to look on with his stiff eyes at the washing of the fish. Here the Baroness came for him and fetched him off to Sirilund. It was marvellous what she could do, such firmness was there in her will and in her thin hand. Just lately she had been plunged in hopeless grief over Glahn's death; but she picked herself up again by her own effort without consolation from outside, so much buoyancy and defiance was there in her. As concerns the Englishman, she achieved a great and noble work with him; she herself said to me: "I have a little nest-egg of affection within me and now I am going to spend it."

And now a remarkable transformation took place with Sir Hugh, in that he never even went to Torpelvik to see his son this year, but sent money to the mother instead; he himself stayed at Sirilund. Sir Hugh was a taciturn gentleman of distinguished appearance, but his face was capable of a genial expression on the rare occasions when he smiled. The Baroness became indispensable to him and in her company he smiled more and more; he went for long strolls with her and there was never a thought of his being intoxicated any more.

Now the same mail-boat was expected back from

Vadsö on her way south, and Sir Hugh prepared to return to England. But as the time drew near the Baroness in her turn began to get ready for a journey and day by day her trunks were carted down to the quay. There was no doubt about it, the Baroness was to accompany Sir Hugh, so entirely had she won his heart. She had entrusted her children to Mack's housekeeper when she was gone.

And now my time had also come to say goodbye; it was the end of May and I was only waiting for the path through the woods to dry up a little. The days were now warm and all the snow was gone, so it would not be long before the path was dry.

I presented Hartvigsen with my last painting, the winter view of the mill and the mountains, and made ready my gun and my bag of clothes; it was Saturday, after the Sunday I would set out. Hartvigsen thanked me cordially for the picture and said: "You saw what my walls were like before you came; come and look at them when you go." "Thank you, I will," said I.

In the evening when the mail-boat came in sight a long way outside the lighthouse, the Baroness came to me and said: "Keep the little girls amused to-night. I have sent them out with Jens Bairnsfather, but perhaps they will soon be back."

As she wore her helpless expression and was twisting her hands in distress, I forbore to ask any questions.

Both she and Sir Hugh went down to the office and talked to Mack; while they were indoors the little girls came strolling home. Sir Hugh was the first to leave the office; he walked a little way along the road to the quay and waited. Then came the Baroness; she saw the children and ducked down so that they might not know her by her height. They were so nearsighted.

"Is that you, mamma?" cried little Tonna.

"No!" answered the Baroness in a feigned voice and hurried on.

"Fancy you thinking that was mamma!" said big Alina, with a silvery peal of laughter at her sister for making such a mistake.

The Baroness seemed to give a start, she said a few hurried words to Sir Hugh, who nodded and smiled. Suddenly the Baroness turned round, hastened to the children and hugged them both at once; and then she said: "Come with mamma then, we're going away—away! There's the ship! Oh, you blessed little dears!"

And the Baroness hurried off, leading the little girls one in each hand. And Sir Hugh nodded to them as they came. All four took the road to the quay.

When Mack came out of the office and went the same way, I too went down to the quay. I was able to take a good leave of the children and thank them for all the hours we had spent together, and they curtsied in return. And they waved while the boat

was rowing out to the ship and called good-bye to their grandfather and to me. That is what I remember of this leave-taking.

I heard afterwards that the Baroness had intended to make enquiries about Sir Hugh's position in England before she married him and fetched the children; but at the last moment she could not leave them behind. And that did all honour to her heart.

The next day was Sunday and a long day; it was quiet now the little girls were gone. That very morning the Hookmaker was sent for and set to work on the silver angels; they were now to be removed once more from the drawing-room and set up on the four posts of Mack's bed; everything was to be as it had been before the Baroness came home. Mack himself supervised the alteration, and finally the quiet and steady Margrete Parlourmaid was fetched to see the new arrangement of the bed.

In the evening I took leave of Mack and all his house, whereupon I betook myself to Hartvigsen's. I proposed to myself to make this leave-taking a short one, for I had learnt a lesson from Nikolai Arentsen's farewell to Rosa. "The last word, I wonder what it will be?" he had said with a sneer. So free of all ties had his spirit become.

Hartvigsen thanked me for all the pictures with which I had adorned his walls and asked my advice as to where he should hang the winter scene when he got it framed; Rosa was kind and amiable and produced wine and cakes. We all talked of the

Baroness, who had gone away without saying good-bye, of Sir Hugh, of his child, of the dried fish and of Mack; and then of Friar Vendt, to whom I was going. Why did I stay there any longer? Perhaps Rosa had asked her husband not to go out when I came, no doubt she had just said that he must help her to talk to me. And Hartvigsen helped. At last he got up, saying:

"But you must see the Prince before you leave."

Rosa also got up and said: "No, let me fetch him!"

"You see, I'm not trusted," said Hartvigsen with a good-natured laugh.

Then Rosa came down with the Prince and we talked of him for a while. Then I thanked them for all they had done for me and said good-bye. Rosa stood up with the child on her breast and gave me her hand; she thanked me in return. When I reached the door she had already seated herself again with the child in her arms. Hartvigsen saw me out and said a few more kind words.

The last words.

When I came home I prayed fervently to God, who alone could help me henceforth. I did not sleep that night; love is hard. But I counted the hours and lay on my bed or sat in a chair till daylight came. It was no more than three o'clock when I took my gun and my bag and wandered into the northern forests.

And these things I have noted down to while

away the time. I am no good either at one thing or another; but I have put this together from my reminiscences and jottings and for this I required no great endowments. That is how it is.

And these pages treat of many, but for me only of one.

OHIO UNIVERSITY LIBRARY

Please return this book as soon as you have finished with it. In order to avoid a fine it must be returned by the latest date stamped below. All books are subject to recall after two weeks or immediately if needed for reserve.

RETURNED BY:

MAY 0 8 1996

MAY 1 2 1996

1 1 1996

OHIO UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES
00597671

T 8950 .H3 R6713 1926x
amsun, Knut, 1859-1952.
osa